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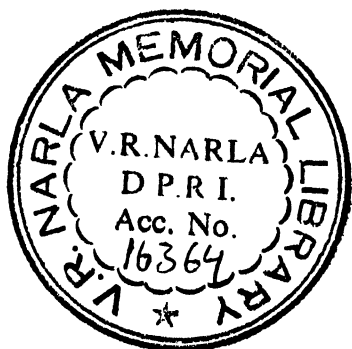
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# HISTORICAL CHANGE

BY

LEWIS EINSTEIN

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Tudor Ideals, etc.*



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## I. INTRODUCTION

This is an attempt to sketch the meaning of change as it affects history. History treats of varied and intricate human activities through the ages, but these pages contain only a fragmentary effort to explore briefly the nature of certain problems that pertain to historical change. A few illustrations have been selected almost at random for this purpose, in order to show some of the aspects of change that can be found in history. They are generally familiar and for the most part of recent interest, for many of them have been found in the practices of the dictators. Many others will easily suggest themselves to anyone.

By whatever avenues it is approached and under whatever shape it is presented, history is always a demonstration of power that is carried out by the medium of continuous change. History necessarily creates change, and the record of human events implies the continuity of change. But power is a substance that is derived from a number of different sources which flow with uneven volume and speed. Its origin can be military or political, economic, moral or ecclesiastical: power may be spasmodic or it can emanate from the sudden violence of a mob. The different elements that compose it will blend in uneven proportions according to their strength, so that they will express themselves in history in different ways and with different consequences. The

pressure which they exercise leads to innumerable experiences which, in spite of frequent superficial resemblances both of cause and purpose, will never be identical. But the effects of these experiences, irrespective of how they are produced, will always be registered by changes, some deliberate and direct, some unintentional and indirect, and some also provoked by counter-movements.

Changes will also be superposed, so to speak, on that continuous and permanent flow which is inherent to life but which when left without specific direction tends to adjust itself functionally to its environment. This takes place by automatic processes rather than by a planned effort. The latter occurs when authority is firmly held or when men try to seize power in order to give a more precise direction to their purposes than by the normal flow of change so that they can quicken its speed and increase its volume. The procedure in itself contributes to change, and the same thing happens when an effort is made in the opposite direction, and when men try by artificial or forceful means to divert the flow into other channels.

History offers no problem of greater importance than to explore the many reasons for change. By what laws can one explain its origin or its intermittence and the varying speed of its rhythm, sometimes so slow over long periods as to seem stagnant, at others racing headlong with all the violence of a mountain torrent? To affirm that change results from a continuous conflict between rival tendencies

or forces and then follows from a clash or fusion of opposite or cross-currents only pushes further back the difficulty. To describe change as something that is brought about by the spread of certain visible or invisible ferments of varying strength does not solve the problem of how these ferments have originated.

Some will argue for a belief that historical sequence proceeds in accordance with a plan or design which is divine or material, as writers with a theological or a Marxist bias maintain. Others will find that events are merely fortuitous or accidental, or else so limited in their real significance that they seem like passing ripples on the surface of time. Such speculations do not need to concern us here—any more than an inquiry into the causes of change need follow the customary schematic divisions of history. Historians are somewhat prone to bisect periods into convenient categories arranged by date and subject, and to believe that they are approaching the truth by this method. When they dub an age by the name of some dominating figure or because they discern in its annals some salient feature, they may also neglect or minimize other important factors because these remain silent below the surface, or inarticulate. Such customary partitions in spite of their plausibility and convenience are usually somewhat arbitrary and incomplete, for too often they tend to leave out important matters and to place others that afterwards come to the fore in a false perspective. As change is eternal it has neither a real beginning nor an end



and, perhaps, it can be approached as well from one direction as from another.

It might be tempting to trace the growth of change by pin-pointing some particular phase of history, but to do this would result in many omissions. For a sketch which only aims to indicate the broad nature of the subject it seemed preferable to select even haphazardly, from the chronicle of past and present, a wide variety of the different causes of change in their general relation to such questions as the character of power, the use of ideas, and the role of leadership. The illustrations chosen are barely outlined and necessarily incomplete, with little connection existing between them other than the general relation which they bear to a common subject. Their range may, however, serve to bring out certain different aspects of an intricate and difficult problem still imperfectly understood and for which no satisfactory method of approach has as yet been devised. This brief study will not have been written in vain if it should lead to any fruitful suggestions for those who to-day, or in the future, may try to discover novel ways of interpreting historical change.

The emphasis of history is commonly placed on events, rather than on the relations, that are not always visible, which events bear to the causes that precede, or the consequences that follow them. Behind every historical act is always a human element to explain why it is impossible to account for change only in a mechanical way. Certain thinkers have tried to discover general principles underneath so as to establish

historical causation and connect history with philosophy. But pure speculation of this order leads away from life, and rigid theories when they are applied to the inconstancy of change would be a contradiction in terms. Nor can the nature of change be interpreted by any supposedly scientific method. Yet between the lofty citadel of philosophy and the low ramparts of history there stretches a largely uncultivated field where one may hope to search for the meaning that change bears to historical action.

Historical change may be compared to a multiple cinematograph that projects a continuously different programme. As a process of nature, change means something that is inherent to life, and is in fact inseparable from existence. The great distinction between the human species and all other forms of life is that only in man can change be produced by a receptiveness to ideas, so that in this way it becomes a conscious act emanating from the will. Physical and material reasons can also influence the human mind and contribute to bring about such acts, but beyond these there is nearly always a remaining residue that is too elusive to be easily explained by any theory.

Every act great or small makes for some change, but by itself change, until it is defined, is only a vague word that covers a wide range. Yet the necessity for change lies deep at the roots of history, at the same time as it is expressed on the surface by something that is infinitely varied. For change is so much a vital accompaniment of everything living that we

are prone to forget the significance and diversity of its continuous relation to historical events.

The course of history can be likened to the flow of a great stream as it runs down to the ocean. There are places where the swift current will break its force against hidden rocks. When the winter snows have melted the river may burst its dikes and flood the countryside. During the summer drought the flow can be sluggish and great sand bars will appear above the surface. But also over long distances the river will flow peacefully and majestically toward an unknown sea.

## II. UNNOTICED GROWTHS AND CHANGES BY DECREE

Shortly after the Revolution broke out in Russia in 1917, a brief item appeared in the Western press that a handful of communists, who lived for years in obscure exile at Geneva, had been helped by the German General Staff to return to Petrograd in a sealed carriage. The Germans accomplished their immediate purpose, to take Russia out of the War, better than they dared to hope, but even the far-sighted General Staff could not have guessed that their own doom would come later at the hands of a regime which they had helped to establish.

Communist plots hatched in cafés at Geneva, and prophecies of world Empire shouted after the defeat

of Germany in the vaults of Munich beer cellars, do not usually come into the news. Why should anyone attach importance to an obscure Austrian corporal who raved wildly about politics to six other unknown and ignorant men with whom he founded a new party that had some absurd aims? Two events which were to lead soon after to some of the greatest changes in world history passed virtually unnoticed at a time when publicity is given to the slightest occurrence. There is nothing surprising in this circumstance. Revolutionary movements start invariably below the surface. Inflammable matter is easy to detect when it has been stacked in the open but harder to discover when it is concealed. Only in silent obscurity is it possible to acquire that early momentum which afterwards helps its diffusion. Organized publicity can even unwittingly assist this process by diverting public attention to more conspicuous matters. Likely enough later historians will discover that ideas and events unobserved to-day or regarded as insignificant may turn out to be of great importance to the future. It would be a bold man who ventured to assert that things were not happening unnoticed even now which will again alter the course of history. It may be as difficult to pick these out from amid the confusion of multiple events as it would be to detect the fish that later will be hatched from a salmon's spawn.

Two thousand years ago, Polybius asked the question of what use was a statesman who could not reckon how, why, and whence, events originated. And he observed that the causes which lead to events

must be guarded against, for great movements often originated from trifles (*History*, III, 6). In times of crisis a statesman will find himself confronted by a difficult dilemma. He may be acutely aware of the existence of deep currents of unrest that lie below the surface without being able to gauge their strength with any accuracy. Is he to yield to vague threats or to suppress opposition and risk a violent explosion, or to adopt a middle course of concession? Often he begins by trying the latter, rarely to the satisfaction of either side. The failure to handle a rapidly shifting situation of this kind may be due to a weakness of character, or of means, or to a mistaken judgment. Whatever is the cause, the result of failure is likely to be revolution.

Great changes never come without warning. Usually they are preceded by a long period of more or less hidden gestation before new movements can gather enough power to acquire the articulate expression that enables them to forge ahead. The world is only taken by surprise because it is always slow to recognize new leadership, prone to disparage novel ideas, and because no ruling class will ever welcome revolutionary changes that tend to upset some comfortable assumptions regarding the supposed stability of their order, the rights of property, and the sanctity of human life. The real pressure for revolution is therefore kept hidden below the surface until opportunity and the acquisition of sufficient strength makes the time ripe for action. Before this happens, although rumblings may be heard, they are usually underrated

and their significance is relegated to a reassuring background. Wishful thinking and warped judgment meet together to pull down many a curtain behind which impending changes can be prepared with greater freedom.

No special gifts of prophecy were needed to forecast the broad lines of future change after the last War. The Western world with half-knowledge saw in the Russian Revolution mainly evidence of the proselytizing spirit of international communism and failed to understand how much of Bolshevism sprang from deep roots embedded in the Russian soil. Long before Lenin's genius became apparent it was not hard to foretell that the incompetence and corruption which characterized Czarism had left a starved and exhausted people clamouring in despair for peace, and ready to welcome any change which would secure this. Illiteracy assisted this process by making the Russian people plastic enough to receive the stamp of great changes. An ignorant peasantry, long used to a ruthless exercise of authority, was to find that this could be still more drastic after the ferocity of Civil War. The only difference was that in the antinomy of good and evil that accompanied Bolshevism many Russians became aware for the first time that they too might hope to share in the benefits of the future.

Also in Germany, after the defeat of 1918, it was simple to foresee the craving for a new leadership that would rebuild the *Reich* from the ruins of disaster and once more flatter the national pride. The

drab Weimar Republic, sabotaged from within, had never fulfilled this yearning even when furtively it prepared for a future war. The revolution in Germany turned out to be a counter-revolution in spite of the democratic veneer that was laid over it in order to placate the victorious powers. The paramount aim of all German policy, whether carried out by Social Democrats, Clericals or Nationalists, was the resurrection of the greatness of the *Reich*. Former enemies expected this, nor did they find anything unreasonable in that aim. Their mistake lay in an unwillingness to recognize that the German idea of greatness was associated with military force, that German efforts were concentrated on reviving that force, and that the purposes which this resurrection had in view could only be attained by war. The last World War came to be regarded more and more in Germany as an interruption in the great march of Pan-German ideas which had developed with increasing momentum long before 1914. The Nazi records are rich in illustrations of how great changes introduced by command can be accepted by a nation for reasons that have nothing to do with their intrinsic merit. Hitler's ideas were old but his tactics were novel, and the junction of the two was to bring forth the monstrous measures that were to separate the Germans from Western civilization.

The Treaty of Versailles had facilitated the rise of Hitler in a very different way from the one commonly asserted. He gained some of his success not, as has been said, because of the harshness of its pro-

visions, for if these had been milder German aggression would have come sooner, but because the first consequence of defeat was to destroy or to weaken both the dynastic and the federal elements that until then had formed the top structure of the *Reich* and which if they had been preserved would have stood as an obstacle to the Nazi bid for power. Hitler found himself able to exploit a situation that was only indirectly connected with the vast changes which he later introduced. A deep racial feeling existed as a kind of undertone in German life. More than a century before a racial creed similar to the Nazi had been expounded by a gymnastic teacher named Jahn, and crushed by Metternich in the name of absolutism. Racial Pan-Germanism needed mass support for success, and the masses only began to be effectively organized toward the end of the nineteenth century. At that time the movement was held in check by Bismarck, who saw more advantage in having Austria as a faithful ally, which the pursuit of Pan-German policy would have made impossible, than in any fanciful dreams of racial expansion. When, in 1918, the two Empires collapsed, when Austria was reduced to a small German state, and princes forsook their thrones, these former obstacles to crude ambitions no longer stood in the way. The tall trees of the German forest had been cut, and a new and uncouth growth shot up unhindered from the soil.

A resentful and humiliated nation that had absolved itself of all blame for the causes of its defeat was certain to follow the first leader who could



inspire confidence in his pledge of victory. Missing only from this easy forecast of the future was the leader's name and the time for his appearance. Missing, too, was the realization in other countries of the implications that followed from his measures, or that Germans were quite so eager for conquest or quite so disposed to acquiesce in Hitler's savagery. The criminally distorted mind of the *Fuehrer* was to revolutionize the *Reich* by a series of vast changes which destroyed all previous standards.

The three totalitarian regimes of Bolshevism, Nazism and Fascism, so different in many respects, had as their common purpose the aim to weave into the national texture a number of drastic changes which were originally designed by small minorities. Fascists and Nazis, unlike the Bolsheviks, who first had to win a hard civil war, met with comparatively little real opposition from their divided opponents while putting through their extensive programmes. Each of these regimes tried to stabilize a disordered situation by establishing a supposedly permanent order of its own which was superimposed from above on the life of the nation. They did this by applying rigid and cruel compulsions to establish uniformity. In all three countries the rulers drew much of their strength from the deep wells of nationalism that were utilized to reinforce their authority. All three were aware that they would succeed or fail less because of the merits or evils of their rule than by their ability to stifle disaffection and to meet eventually the harder test of war.

Only a period of disordered ideas, such as always follows after a great defeat, when a previous order has been discredited, could have brought about the vast changes which had been originally planned underground by small groups of men who rose to the surface with sufficient authority to alter the habits of great nations. The violence of revolution, when it leaves behind it a normal existence, makes for sudden innovations; the more drastic these are the more drastic will be the methods needed for their enforcement. A new mechanical technique could now be applied to repression as well as to persuasion, and the processes of transformation were speeded in contrast with the more leisurely devices that had formerly been employed to secure the transmission of arbitrary power. The immense changes introduced were soon extended to every section of the population. They left the problem of human adjustment to be met by a new educational propaganda which was conducted on a similar gigantic scale.

Every fighting creed, whether its aim is religious, political or economic, or whether it is good or evil, has within it a proselytizing spirit which must make for victory or defeat. Usually such creeds gradually lose their fighting edge so that they cease to be dangerous. Mussolini, in his earlier and more cautious days, had been aware of the risk in going too far, and then announced that Fascism was not an article for export. But every aggressive form of proselytism must aim at bringing about acceptance, whether the result is obtained by conviction, opportunism or fear.

The effort of such a faith must be to try to uproot, or at least to keep down and to neutralize, any contrary forces or any elements that stand in the path of its success. This necessity is not always apparent, because, in the ordinary use of the word, proselytism has ceased to enter as an active force in religion, and usually confines itself to moderate and reasonable attempts to advance the cause of some particular doctrine without undue interference with others. Questions of religious creed have long ago ceased to inflame human passions, and in the liberal world of yesterday men had grown accustomed to seeing others of different faith live side by side in peace and amity. The Nazi faith, however, with its design of conquest, could not but revert to a former bigotry at the same time as it declared its own tenets forever unalterable. Hitler's goal of world domination left no alternative between leading the German nation to total victory or plunging it in total disaster.

The *Fuehrer's* choice was the result of excluding all possibility of peaceful change and left no room for any normal evolution that might take place through a compromise between different opinions. Changes that are imposed by ruthless violence will end in violence, an adage which is better expressed by the biblical words—'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' Defeated doctrines are apt to be quickly but not entirely forgotten before the reality of events, for new ideas that are adjusted to altered conditions will step into their place. Vanquished nations usually turn against their leaders

after these have driven them to ruin, just as in pagan times worshippers would insult and overthrow the false gods who could not give them victory. Ideology, like petrol in a car, is a combustible which serves only for a limited mileage, and Stalin has observed that Hitlers come and go but that Germany would remain. But in the process of elimination defeated ideas will not always disappear as fully as some may expect. Not infrequently a revival comes with another generation, yet it will hardly survive a second defeat. The Napoleonic idea that outlived Waterloo, really perished at Sedan, but the ghost of Napoleon still haunted British imaginations with unfortunate results, for after 1918, the fear of his spectre, even though unmentioned, was among the reasons that led to the rift between London and Paris, and aided the rise of Hitler. It may be many years before the ghost of the *Fuehrer* will be finally laid.

### III. THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN HISTORICAL CHANGE

In times of grave danger measures of survival will be taken that are prompted by primitive instincts which then operate far more powerfully in determining the needs of the moment than any measures due to preconceived ideas. This explains the paradox of how Bolshevism and Democracy, after having tried in vain for years to destroy each other, suddenly

became allies so that each will be indebted for survival and victory to the other.

When resort is had to force this signifies a departure from the normal processes of reasonable change and makes for something which may be unpredictable. Leadership will no longer be limited by any question of principle, for a democracy can also grant dictatorial powers so that a leader may use the same methods whether he stands for democracy or for autocracy, for liberalism or for reaction. Even his own convictions may have little to do with his position; the only thing that is demanded of him in a time of crisis is his ability to lead successfully. William of Orange, the leader of the Protestant cause, was, for instance, reputed to be an agnostic.

How far a leader can by his own initiative alter the course of history or should be regarded mainly as the standard-bearer for beliefs and aims that somehow or in some way might have found expression without him will always be controversial. In Carlyle's opinion leadership was everything, but generally speaking there are definite limitations to its exercise, and it is probable that great actions have been given their shape from existing conditions much more than they have been created by the initiative of individuals. That ripeness is all holds true also of the relations between men and events even when these change the course of history. If Columbus had discovered America a century earlier it is yet most unlikely that the New World would have been colonized any sooner. If his adventurous exploration

had failed, or if he had never lived, certainly not many years could have passed before some other navigator must have found the Western Hemisphere.

The chain of historical causation is too variable and may be too obscure to be reduced to a formula. Men achieve great things usually owing to a combination of some very different elements, not all of which need be either audible or visible. When explanations of history are advanced in terms of individuals they can easily be quite as misleading as those interpretations that rely solely on the effects of material forces, or on the fortuitous occurrence of the irrational. If Napoleon had perished on the bridge at Lodi, if Hitler had been killed by a stray bullet in the Munich *putsch*, history would certainly have been differently written. But how differently it is impossible for anyone to say with assurance. Two men, unlike in every respect, in times of crisis provided a leadership for certain trends and latent forces which they found imperfectly prepared and to which they imparted a special accent of their own. But if neither of them had lived, might not the unshaped but explosive energies which they organized have discovered some similar expression under other leaders? Obvious as it is to attribute many of the great changes that take place to the initiative of a few individuals who have stamped a period with a special impress of their own, this belief will not by itself be sufficient to explain the course of events.

Pascal is the author of a famous epigram that history might have been written differently if

Cleopatra's nose had been an inch longer. He would have come nearer to the truth if he had remarked that the wealth of Egypt offered too inviting a prey for any blemish of the royal nose not to have been overlooked by ambitious Romans. The accidental and irrational factors that occasionally seem to determine historical action in many unexpected ways may be compared to those tactical surprises on the battlefield which often alter the time-table, but rarely affect the major strategy of a campaign. Such occurrences are much more likely to project a false light on events when, as frequently has happened, they lead to explaining the inevitable in terms of the irrelevant. Waterloo, for instance, is commonly regarded as having been decided by Blücher's army arriving when Napoleon expected Grouchy. But even if Grouchy had then come in time and even if Napoleon could again have snatched victory from disaster as at Marengo, it is likely that, with his then depleted forces pitted against the coalition's growing strength, his final defeat could not long have been averted.

The tragedy of Lincoln's assassination probably had little effect on the course of history, though it added immensely to the President's fame. It is highly questionable if Lincoln's wise policy of conciliation towards the South could have prevailed against the embittered radical majority in Congress, and if the President would not have found himself engaged in a hard struggle with his own party which would have been detrimental to his prestige and might have led at best to an unsatisfactory compromise.

To attribute great changes to the acts of individuals who are regarded like Homer's heroes is to oversimplify history. Even a leader will often benefit from an unearned increment to which he may not always be entitled. The President of the United States is credited or blamed for much legislation passed during his administration, although personally he may have little to do with this. In relation to historical change leadership is a highly variable factor and rarely is it wholly responsible for what takes place. An eminent leader may also contribute to the enrichment of history more by his virtues than by his acts. General Lee is the outstanding example of a great soldier and of a lofty character who left little that is enduring beyond a noble memory.

The irony of history is not infrequently reflected in the discrepancy that exists between aims and means as they lead to useless or to frustrated efforts. There is more than one European country which would have enjoyed a happier present if it had not been haunted by the greatness of its past. The annals of every Central American republic could tell the absurd story of would-be Napoleons strutting about vainly, but not always without some elements of distinction. With something akin to this in his mind the late Sultan Reshad, who was regarded as a simpleton, and before he ascended the Ottoman throne had spent most of his life as a prisoner, remarked, with more sagacity than he was credited for, that while on his way to mosque a beggar in the street had shouted to him that any nation could find a Padishah but not



every Padishah could find a nation, and that he had stopped his carriage in order to thank the beggar for these words of wisdom.

There is also another element to consider. The most enduring achievements of Napoleon did not take place on the battlefield, but are to be found in the sphere of administration, where his principal merit lay in the choice of advisers and in giving to their recommendations the prestige of his authority. Some of his military glory was reflected on his Marshals, but it never extended to little-known civilians who were responsible for the most lasting part of the Emperor's rule. These men, lawyers and administrators, belonged to what may be called a political middle class which in all civilized communities has always taken a great part in the shaping of changes. This is only partially explained by its technical ability, for the purpose of competence of this kind is to divert the swift current of change into the permanent reservoir of stability. Few historians correctly appraise the nature of influences of this order which are usually concealed in many unrecorded conversations and unpublished memoranda. But a leader who no longer wishes to rely on bayonets will feel powerless without the help of the silent men in the background whom he needs to advise him with expert knowledge how to frame measures and apply decisions. These men will obtain little credit for his successes and may be blamed for his failures, sometimes by enemies who begin their attacks where they think the leader is weakest, sometimes by the ruler himself.

To gain popularity Henry VIII sent Empson and Dudley to the scaffold, and many other rulers have tried to escape from criticism by casting an undeserved blame on subordinates.

History, which is primarily interested in results, judges men by their achievements so that it is apt to neglect the intricate steps and the devious paths which often make changes possible. Paradoxically, also, a leader will obtain credit for measures that are originated by others and which he has only taken up, when at the same time his particular contribution to their success may be ignored or forgotten. The leader's special task in bringing about change is likely to be selective in choosing from many competitive measures those which he finds desirable and then in appointing the right agents to carry them out. He will also have to smooth the many difficulties that invariably arise and make whatever tactical dispositions are necessary. To-day, when the approval of enormous masses of people is more than ever indispensable, the organization and manipulation of public opinion to support a cause requires to be most skilfully prepared, and a leader's ability will be gauged by his success in this direction. The circumstance that much of this preparation goes on unseen and takes place behind doors tends to throw a false light on his real accomplishment. To understand this may be less a question of measuring the visible forces that lead to change than of weighing the difficulties which have to be surmounted before results become possible, and determining what means of persuasion are necessary:

The technique of change, although very different in fascist and in democratic states, has to some extent been stabilized in its general character and procedure. Before changes are introduced the complicated mechanism of modern society permits of tests of opinion to be taken by somewhat less fortuitous processes than may appear at first. The thorough Nazi organization allowed for this, so that Hitler never embarked lightly on his policies or without a considerable knowledge of the obstacles before him and of the means he required to overcome them. The ramifications of the National Socialist party control descended to the very lowest level, and a local watcher was put in charge of every block of flats in Germany, not only to give an easy satisfaction to the vanity of the lowly, but with the direct obligation to supervise and report on the lodgers' way of thinking. For a different purpose something similar can be found in the regular machinery of American politics; for drifts of opinion and tests of party strength are appraised by following the reports of obscure District leaders as these funnel through to the top. Some of the social changes to which Franklin Roosevelt's name is attached might never have been introduced without a knowledge obtained beforehand through many different channels which then led to decisions that resulted in policies and were afterwards framed into legislative measures.

A political leader is not unlike a sculptor who has brought to him a marble which is already hewn in the rough by stone-cutters. He need not waste his

strength by using his chisel for the grosser labour but keeps it sharp for the finishing touches. A leader will try to mould an opinion which is already half formed and receptive, and his skill will be displayed by his ability to gauge the extent to which he can do this. The tragic example of the solitary Wilson running far ahead of the American people is a reminder of how the ambition to bring about too abrupt or too startling a change may lead to reactions that will defeat the original purpose.

An ambitious politician who wishes to justify his claim to leadership must break away from the previous pattern and offer instead what appears to be a fresh one of his own. The nature of the changes which he advocates may be moderate or radical, peaceful or violent, liberal or reactionary, but it is essential that the measures which he puts forward should seem different and yet not too different from those that exist, and that they should contain the promise of a remedy. Afterwards, when the leader's fame has been associated with innovations he has been responsible for, his foremost interest will be to preserve his authority under the plea that his reforms must not be endangered. That is what Theodore Roosevelt tried to do when he gave the presidential succession to Taft. The goal of stability will, however, replace the desire for change, as happened during the Taft administration. When changes have been made that are not the result of some irresponsible pressure, and are not imposed by spasmodic violence, they lead inevitably to a pause just as every pause must, sooner

or later, make for more change, as happened in Russia when Lenin introduced the 'Nep' policy which was later given up. In this way a kind of invisible shuttle passes between two seemingly opposite poles, the one of change, the other of stability, which tends to reduce any strict line of demarcation between them. Whether the leader is responsible for the change or the change produces the leader is in fact much more a question of emphasis and of degree than it is of substance.

There is occasionally an unpredictable element in the relation between change and leadership when for some reason the deeper forces that may lie silent under the surface are aroused and suddenly react with unexpected violence. How could it have been foreseen that an obscure Arab camel driver was to found a religion which was destined to prevail over a large part of the world and to count his future followers by hundreds of millions? Great movements like the advent of Islam may interrupt the normal march of history and lead to changes that affect the lives of vast communities in ways for which no easy explanation can be found.

Every new order contains more of the old than is usually admitted, although the elements that survive may be preserved under other labels or remain carefully hidden underneath. This allows for many of the effects that are incidental to original maladjustments, which have been brutally imposed by force, to be gradually softened later by silent adjustments. This process usually takes place inconspicuously in con-

trast to the early violence that accompanied the original change. In time there will often follow a marriage between old and new such as occurred in England after the Conquest. At other times, as is still true in Eastern countries, different elements of the population continue to dwell more or less peacefully side by side but in completely separate spheres. Hate is too violent an emotion to be sustained indefinitely at fever point, and in the continuous rhythm of change as an emotional feeling it has its ups and downs. After Islam had spent its first fanatical fury its leaders no longer tried to impose their fiery creed by threat of massacre and the Caliphs were to grant generous liberties to those of their subjects who had not accepted the Koran. The fierce hatred which long separated the Moslem from the Christian world also in time abated. Crusaders might invade the Holy Land, but they soon discovered the convenience of living on friendly terms with Saracen emirs. In a later age, the Most Christian King Francis the First felt no hesitation in allying himself with the Turkish Sultan against the most Catholic Emperor.

Great spiritual changes have often been helped by motives that have nothing even remotely in common with them. Henry VIII's divorce was to aid the Protestant cause. Martin Luther, among other reasons for his break from the Papacy, complained of the flight of German money over the Alps, and German princes who adopted his creed were not averse to discovering in it the possibilities of many temporal

benefits. The sixteenth century is commonly regarded as an age of faith and of religious wars, yet Charles V, devout Catholic though he was, found nothing amiss in using a Lutheran soldiery to sack Papal Rome; later, Cardinal Richelieu persecuted Huguenots in France, but allied himself with Protestant princes in Germany. Whenever the advantage of the moment is plain the most fundamental differences of principle will be whittled down and harmonized with much that appears incompatible. The compromises that follow will then be reflected in many of the changes that take place in history. If surprise is expressed at these inconsistencies it is only because men attach too great an importance to professions and labels. The dictators understood this when they employed a democratic vocabulary to carry out anti-democratic purposes.

#### IV. IDEAS AND CHANGE

Slogans are usually crudely phrased ideas put forward in the belief that men will fight better for a cause under a flamboyant banner. The receptiveness of most people to a new idea that leads to change depends, however, less on its novelty, its merit, or its truth, than it does on its appropriateness in fitting the spirit of the age and on the promise it holds out of accomplishing the changes which the more masterful members of a community regard as desirable.

Ideas can originate anywhere, or at any time, and may lie dormant or quiescent over very long periods. In their chrysalis stage they are likely to remain pure intellectual abstractions that are confined within a limited space. Only when they take the colour of the atmosphere around them do they exercise real influence over the actions of men. How, why, or when, this happens is difficult to say. Beliefs in liberty and in human dignity were already current among thinkers in the sixteenth century, but they were only widely proclaimed in the eighteenth century, and applied on a great scale in the nineteenth, to be threatened by a new reaction in our own time.

Ideas usually begin like seeds in the ground where many perish or lead only a struggling existence. The sower scatters his seed in furrows and sower, seed, and soil all have their part in this process, for each is necessary to the other. The sower will have toiled in vain unless the seed that he plants will ripen; the seed will remain sterile if it cannot draw substance from the friendly earth; and the soil will remain barren or yield only useless weeds if not laboured and fertilized. A similar process takes place in history, for an idea at birth may be treasured only in some dreamer's fancy, like the hope for a United Italy which poets like Petrarch, and thinkers like Macchiavelli, cherished centuries ago. Ideas can later acquire a body and in this way pass by methods that are mysterious from having been fleshless abstractions to assume a corporeal shape; leaders will spring up



who identify themselves with ideas, attracted by the discovery of vehicles to advance a cause which often they associate with a personal ambition. Every idea that makes for change brings about its own transformation, and in proportion to its success it will divest itself of abstractness and substitute for this a human appeal. As soon as an idea has touched the emotional side of man it will lose most of its early intellectual quality. Far more than reason, emotion will become the denominator which brings together men of different origins and attracts them to give their hearts to a common cause. Only later when the tense feelings aroused have had time to calm down will the calmer processes of reason again be able to influence the silent adjustment that goes on continuously between ideas and life.

When a new idea can draw a favourable response from the atmosphere of an age the effect of the ferment set up will be contagious. At first this fever that it causes may spread only among humble folk, as did primitive Christianity. On a lesser scale the influence may be expressed by jests and ridicule, as happened when men of letters prepared the future French Revolution, and did not foresee that it would shortly pass from a generous humanity to blind fury. Sometimes a sense of injustice, like that which stirred the Abolitionists and inspired *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, will touch the conscience of a community, and impel it to act. No universal principle can ever explain why great changes take place more readily at certain times than at others, beyond the broad generalization

that sees this depending on how well a new idea will fit and shape the spirit of an age.

Yet no change will ever be accepted without resistance and this may lead to an orderly struggle that ends in a compromise, or else result in much bitterness and the violence that may follow when a new measure threatens some established interest or order. A demand for change may be advanced prematurely and suffer defeat, as happened with reforms in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution, or it may be presented without sufficient unity behind it or only inadequate support, as in India. In the course of many struggles the convictions of men who, willingly or otherwise, have been drawn into the conflict will become hardened. The most illuminating stage in the history of an idea is not, however, after it has triumphed, but when it meets with serious opposition and the issue still hangs in the balance. Ideas then shape themselves into something positive as they did in England over the Reform Bill, so that their expression grows more rigid and is associated with a firm purpose until the clash which develops changes the atmosphere of an age. Even without resorting to violence, a hard-fought contest will bring out the character of men at their best and at their worst, and reveal all the baseness and generosity of which a many-headed human nature is capable.

When an idea has suffered from a decisive defeat, great changes will usually take place for some time in an opposite direction. Instead of the earlier tolerance or indifference that had prevailed before,

the free expression of opinion will be suppressed and a rigid submission be demanded on the part of the vanquished. This happened during the Catholic Reaction that drove intellectual liberty underground after the easy freedom of the early Renaissance. It happened again in the harsh repression that was enforced after the fall of Napoleon. In our own times the compulsions against democratic ideas imposed by dictators were carried out with comparative facility, because only a stalwart few were at first prepared for the martyrdom which earlier ages, that were characterized by a greater faith, had once freely accepted. A reluctance to suffer for a cause was natural to expect after a century of liberal institutions had led to the belief that tortures were evils of the past. A resolution to face martyrdom calls for fervent belief and considerable moral training. During the English Reformation the same men who in the presence of death had at first recanted their creed, when brought to the stake some years later suffered with firm courage for their faith. Before this war there were not many individuals in any democratic country who held deep political convictions, and still fewer who were ready to make any great sacrifices for their own lukewarm beliefs or expected that such things could ever be asked of them. Far more were willing to obey authority and were prepared to accept in its success the proof that what is must be right. The violent changes which were rapidly carried out in the Totalitarian States have to be judged against this background of indifference, opportunism, cyni-

cism and fear, that explains what took place much better than did the mob's frenzied applause for their leader's shrieks.

Ideas as they spread tend more and more to blend with other more earthly ingredients—which is a fortunate circumstance, for the tyranny of a pure idea becomes the worst of all if it is unrelieved by any human weakness. In his history of the French Revolution, Taine observed that when a general idea entered an ignorant mind it worked havoc, and he might have added that the most dangerous form of all ignorance is political ignorance, particularly when this is accompanied by great power. The reason why German political ignorance has been so harmful to the world is because it has been associated with a singular Teutonic predilection for general ideas. This, may partly have been due to the influence of some German professors whose unbalanced theories had been carried to extreme, after they had been evolved in academic isolation. Certain general ideas taken out of their proper perspective were applied to politics, and with the unreasoning obedience of German soldiers who are trained to follow their officers blindly, the German people followed the particular ideas which appealed to their nationalist instinct to a logical conclusion unrelieved by any other considerations.

Under the influence of these ideas the Nazis discovered subjects like geopolitics and the so-called racial sciences with all their cruel absurdities. They talked much of the spirit yet failed to understand the

real nature of the spirit which makes it stronger than blood or the reasons why ideas exist that have changed human conduct far more than consanguinity. For instance, from a purely racial point of view there is little difference between Germans of the Rhineland and the Dutch, or between south Germans and the German Swiss. Probably there is little difference between south Germans and northern French, who are far closer to the former by the tests of anthropology than Normans and Picards are to the French of the Mediterranean regions. Millions of Americans are of more or less near or remote, more or less mixed or pure German ancestry. These examples help towards understanding how little meaning any kinship of race stands for in comparison with the deeper loyalty that binds men to their country. The mental outlook of Dutchmen, Swiss, or Americans, whatever is their origin, has been shaped much more by their institutions, their associations and their history than by blood, for in the words of Renan, the real meaning of a nation is the memory of a common achievement and the desire to work together for a common aim.

The Nazi exaggeration of race is only partly explained by the theories of half-demented professors and the crude ambitions born of political inexperience, for it emanated much more from the scattered geographical distribution of the Teutonic tribes. In England, and in France, little attention was ever paid to racial questions because both countries had established their national unity centuries ago, whereas German unity was not created until 1870. Even then

the new Empire preserved certain deep rifts of religious and regional difference, and many Germans continued to regard their *Reich* as incomplete without Austria. Strictly speaking there has never been a real German frontier to the East, and just as there were islands of Slavs in Prussia and Saxony, there were German minorities in every country of central Europe, sometimes living side by side with other races, sometimes dwelling in distinct communities as far east as the Volga. The fact is also often overlooked that until recent years German influence had radiated more from Vienna than it did from Berlin, and that it was powerfully felt in all the professions as well as in different classes of society through eastern Europe. The connecting link was always the German idea, sometimes only cultural, more often noisily asserted, and which as it descended to lower levels became increasingly attached to race. In this way it led to those wider implications and aggressive ambitions to which the German people so readily responded after their defeat in 1918. It was no mere coincidence that the leader of this movement conceived in adversity should himself be Austrian-born and that his lieutenants, like Hess, Rosenberg, Darré and others, were born outside Germany, or that the Pan-German ideas which Hitler adopted were those which already forty years before Baron Schönerer had expounded in Bohemia. When different nationalities, like Czechs and Germans, live in close proximity the idea of race takes its most violent form.

The use of an idea deliberately employed as an

instrument of change has been a feature common to every national movement during the last century. All of these possessed in greater or less degree the same characteristic, which was to adopt a half-mystical, half-racial concept in order to achieve national unity. By a method which was common to all these movements they revived some more or less historical memories of the supposed glories of a distant past. National ideas were put forward modestly enough to begin with, and were at first only associated with native culture rather than with the claim for political rights. Then gradually, step by step, the idea was extended until great changes followed naturally, to affect the lives of entire populations.

An example of how this process took place can very briefly be sketched in Bohemia. The Czech national spirit had been virtually extinguished after the battle of the White Mountain in 1620, and only the rough spoken language survived as a dialect used by peasants. In the first half of the last century under the influence of the ideas of the French Revolution, a few scholars began the patient task of furthering a linguistic and cultural revival. They received some help from the most unexpected quarters. The Bohemian cities at that time were entirely Germanized, and the middle classes were then believers in liberal ideas. To counter this democratic pressure some of the great Austrian landowners deliberately encouraged the Czech revival, never supposing that it could extend beyond the peasants who lived under an almost feudal control and whom they hoped to use against

the German *bourgeois*. The movement soon grew far beyond the peasantry. More and more the Czech idea brought radical changes that were woven into the texture of Bohemian life. The newly created gymnastic associations known as the *Sokols* diffused a sense of disciplined national unity, which was founded on gymnastics, into every village. Schools, theatres, and concerts became the recognized mediums of a revived and ardent national expression. In vain the discomfited Germans stubbornly resisted these cultural inroads in a land which until then they had regarded as their own and in which they considered themselves to be the superior race. For decades the struggle between two rival cultures went on, often taking grotesque forms. An opera, a sports meeting, or a lecture, would lead to window smashing and street brawls, for rowdyism was used as the recognized instrument of an ideal. In this way a combative enthusiasm was organized, for the cumulative effect of innumerable petty incidents was to build a new nation with an acutely aroused political consciousness. The Czechs knew how to wait, but also knew, when the time came, how to assert their rights. The Habsburg Empire always tried to govern by balance more than by principle, and inclined first to one side and then to the other, using a policy that made for delay but could not make for stability. In 1914, the World War gave a long-awaited opportunity to the desires of a nation submerged for three centuries which by force of will had risen from the ashes of the past. There are in history few more remarkable illustrations



of how a great change had been produced by an idea.

When political change takes place in an organized community it usually comes as the result of some pressure that is often applied to the normal flow of life. Such a stimulus can originate from economic, social or military sources just as much as political; it can be organized or spontaneous, reasoned or emotional. The general purpose held out by any kind of persuasion is the benefit which is to be anticipated by adopting or introducing some change that invariably is linked with an expected advantage.

Except in primitive life, human action is neither automatic nor instinctive, and is nearly always receptive to the influence of ideas that may be near or remote, direct or indirect. We therefore associate the pressure for change with the influence of ideas, for every idea that has a living meaning and is not a pure abstraction must make for some change. The historian's problem is to discover how far any changes whose consequences are registered by events have been influenced by ideas. Women's suffrage is an illustration of this.

More than is commonly supposed the first World War was a battle between rival though somewhat spurious ideas. Innumerable studies have been made to discover the origins of the war, and many explanations have been advanced to account for it, but far too little attention has been paid to the simple reason which was stated in the German White Book published soon after the outbreak, and afterwards dis-

regarded. The support that Berlin pledged so unwisely and unreservedly to Vienna, early in July 1914, and which allowed Austria to attack the Serbs, came from the conviction that if the *Reich's* assistance was not forthcoming it would only be a question of time before the numerically preponderant Slavs in the Austrian Empire gained mastery over the German element and altered the political complexion of the Habsburg State at the expense of Germany. Berlin, with its customary fondness for questionable general propositions, believed that it was imperative to check this drift at any cost in order to prevent a future Slav Austria from entering the Russian orbit. In this way, the war was at first made to assume the appearance of a great racial conflict between Slavs and Teutons. That nothing of the kind happened in the sense that Berlin had forecast is one of the most convincing illustrations that history can offer of the errors and fallacies contained in many general ideas.

In the last World War some other ideas met, however, with a defeat that was more apparent than real. The destruction of the Hohenzollern Empire seemed to put an end to Pan-German dreams, when actually it freed these from their former impediments. The destruction of the Romanoff Empire seemed to destroy Pan-Slavism as a danger, but left it only dormant to reappear again in another form. The destruction of the Habsburg Empire left as heirs the so-called Succession States. The subject races of the old Austria benefited, however, from the circumstance that their national aims coincided with the purposes of

Allied armies, and the changes registered by the Peace Treaties were only the natural consequences of earlier preparations. But the sudden disappearance of many old-established political, social and economic values resulted in a chaos out of which order could only be gradually evolved by new changes and arrangements. Changes are rarely all black or all white but usually contain a good deal of grey. They shape themselves haltingly at first and then proceed in accordance with the forces behind. The great mistake made by the Treaties of St Germain, and Trianon, had been in failing to foresee how easily a carefully adjusted order could be upset by a single outside power strong enough to direct changes in the way it liked. The day that European peace was threatened by a resurgent Germany, the security designed for Central Europe existed no more.

#### V. IDEAS AND CHANGE (*continued*)

Ideology is an ugly word which signifies that ideas have a practical application. This has always been true, for in one form or another, hidden, avowed or imperfectly expressed, ideas have made for many historical changes, although their influence is subject to certain limitations. The British, for instance, apart from cherishing a few elementary political concepts, care singularly little for any general ideas and in striking contrast to the Germans are far more inclined to distrust them. English activities, when for

centuries they ranged over the world, have hardly ever followed any preconceived design, and the Empire was largely built instinctively as a result of more or less fortuitous occurrences. Instead of actions following from ideas, the British in their relation to subject peoples have been far more inclined to shape their ideas from an acquired experience. The nature of their domination over other races has repeatedly altered primarily in response to changes of opinion that went on in England. The 'White Man's Burden' sung by Kipling has within the space of a single generation been replaced by a more sympathetic understanding of native rights. In colonial administration there were always three factors to consider—ideas, policies and agents, each moving on a different plane, but working together in a combination that could only make for change. As the three could never be evenly or continuously kept on the same level, disparities were bound to arise between them; an idea might be good without fitting a policy, or the agent who was entrusted to carry it out could be incompetent. Somewhere, at some time, differences appeared and changes became inevitable. But under the British system these changes, because they are less closely associated with rigid ideas, have not been abrupt, harsh and violent like the German, but are usually carried out in a spirit of moderation and compromise.

It is characteristic of the English that the changes which have taken place in their history hardly ever followed from any far-reaching plan. Since the

sixteenth century when British navigators sailed to discover new territories, when British settlers colonized new domains, and British merchants shipped their wares in British ships, the nation's buoyant energies found ready outlets for enterprise and little use for theory. Perhaps, for this reason, Englishmen have never suffered from the same sense of frustration as the Germans, and have never indulged in vindictive brooding. One often sees in English country houses rooms or wings that have been added by different generations, usually with little regard for any architectural plan. Something similar can also be discerned in the changes that have taken place in British political life. English history shows how new measures have usually been adopted piecemeal so that the nation has had time to adjust itself to changes that have gradually broadened its foundations. These seemingly haphazard methods reflect the deep political wisdom of the British people. Their distrust for general ideas may be due to recognizing instinctively that living forces are superior to abstract principles in their relation to a very opportunist sense of reality. Time and again this practical philosophy has enabled the English to alter their outlook in order to adjust it to the necessities of the moment. Often they have resisted pressure so long as this could safely be done, but when it became too insistent they would accept it with good grace, as in the case of American independence, or react vigorously against it, as in the World Wars. This apparent want of any consistent principle of conduct has repeatedly puzzled conti-

nentials by its seeming contradictions, and led to some serious mistakes being committed on both sides, as happened over appeasement, when this left a false impression both in Berlin and at Moscow. It was difficult for Germans to understand the full implications of the national change that came swiftly over England between Munich and Dunkirk, or how this complete reversal in their attitude responded to the deep instincts of a people who have always kept singularly free from attachment to any abstract considerations and whose policy for that reason has often appeared irrational. Time and again, the fondness which many Europeans cherish for logical conclusions that seem so convincing, caused them to blunder in the inferences which they drew regarding the British attitude.

After the last War when in the flush of victory England had accepted the independence of the Irish Free State, this recognition seemed to many continentalers like the dissolution of an Empire. Later, by the Statute of Westminster, England acquiesced in the great Dominions becoming independent communities and loosened without really weakening the imperial structure. Theory was to play very little part in these great changes. Even British Labour has never cared for the doctrinaire considerations that formerly disturbed the unity of its continental counterparts who indulged in almost theological hair-splitting when they discussed the writings of Karl Marx. The social changes which Labour has supported always aimed much more at improving

the condition of the working classes than at putting into practice abstract socialist theories.

Were it possible to generalize regarding the nature of changes in different countries, there might be a grain of truth in remarking that in England change as a rule is gradual but effective, whereas in Germany it is more likely to be loud and violent; in France change has usually been more apparent than real, whereas the development of American life has taken place in a permanent state of change that affected everything except its politics. Yet the drift of these changes has been in certain definite directions.

As might be expected of a new country in a new world, America until recently was more concerned with questions of internal development than with its outer relations. The transformation of the small seaboard confederation of the eighteenth century to the gigantic Empire of to-day can be explained in terms of space, population and institutions or of all three. The amazing feature of American expansion was to make the country younger than in its beginnings, for at the end of the eighteenth century the United States in many respects was a more mature country than it is to-day. This process of transformation by a kind of rejuvenation is still going on, and so long as America continues to expand with her present momentum it is difficult to foretell where and when a pause will come.

One reason why the reservoir of national energy still overflows is that the American idea provides one of the most powerful solvents that the world has ever

known, for it is based on confidence in human nature and a belief in the freedom of man in free surroundings where he can breathe an optimism which is favourable to progress. Unquestionably this idea has proved a great factor in the growth of the country, and the immense changes which have marked the development of the United States would hardly have been possible otherwise. American history during the last century to a great extent is economic history as it has been reflected in the social, moral and political aspects of many changes that took place. A colloquialism, 'The sky's the limit', gave an appropriate motto for the gigantic expansion of the country's resources, but inevitably this process of vast growth was accompanied by much unruliness. The range permitted to human initiative was so wide and the rewards granted to individual enterprise were so great that the ordinary restraints customary in communities that live in more settled conditions could not carry the same weight in the United States. The changes that were to transform the American people in their sweep toward the Pacific and the huge scale of their domestic development could hardly avoid being accompanied by much disorder. The more picturesque aspects of this lawlessness became apparent in the conditions that prevailed along the frontier as it kept moving rapidly westward. Violence of this kind was never of long duration, and as fast as conditions became more settled the wild men left of their own account or were driven away. Long before they had gone, courtrooms, and school houses,



and the allotment of public lands for educational purposes, indicated the type of civilization which the new settlers proposed to establish. A more insidious lawlessness that emanated from the vast opportunities offered by developing the country's immense resources was to survive long after communities new and old had attained stability in other directions. At a time when continuous changes were transforming the conditions of life in the United States, it was paradoxical to see the same men who in their business activities trampled ruthlessly on competitors, or conspired together to fix extortionate prices, conduct themselves in other respects like patriotic and useful citizens who were genuinely interested in advancing the public welfare. This ethical contradiction came as the result of many still unshaped standards of conduct in a country that by reason of its rapid growth had not yet felt the need to adjust its business practices to the same social behaviour as in older communities. Amid the disordered growth of a gigantic expansion the foundations of a new order and of an increased stability were gradually being laid.

In the evolution of American life one is able to distinguish three broad lines of change as they have developed jointly and simultaneously, though also with different strength and speed. All three were closely related to each other. The first aimed at an expansion into new fields that were increasingly restricted, the second at concentrating on, enlarging and improving old ones, whereas the third has

mainly looked for stability. Similar trends can of course be found in every country, but not on the huge American scale. Thus a desire for perfectionism of the 'bigger and better' kind stood in reality for a kind of internal expansion that has made for continued growth. There is hardly any form of national life, whether it is economic, social or intellectual, in which progress of this nature has not been registered, so that the future possibilities of change must be anticipated far more from the development of existing activities, and resources, than by a pioneer desire to embark on fresh ventures that have not yet been fully explored. This type of activity makes in fact for stability by a tendency to concentrate on what already exists.

There is also apparent in American life a trend that moves in a backward direction and tries to halt the flow of changes by reverting to the past in a belief that in this way it can recover something for the future. Its political expression was isolationism that went with certain nativistic movements which were directed against the alleged corrupting effects of foreign elements, or took at times a fanatical form that led to the excesses of Prohibition. Many Americans tried to cling to the past because they felt bewildered by the disorder incidental to novel and unfamiliar conditions that so often attend a too sudden expansion, and because of this dislike they would have wished to turn to the practices of a somewhat decayed and remote period. In its more moderate and reasonable expression, some of these tendencies

were reflected in legislative measures that have been enacted during the last two decades in order to restrict immigration and to confine it within a desired pattern.

The type of life which many millions of plain people have established over the width of the United States has been created almost instinctively by men who live for the most part in more or less uniform conditions within a vast territory which has few natural, physical or geographical lines of demarcation. This circumstance which makes for political unity also facilitated the growth of vast industrial enterprises that could operate over wide areas, but their unrestrained power needed an antidote and the nation insisted on controlling their activities. Industry was in this way interfered with, but many of the so-called radical measures were far more conservative by their stabilizing effects than was originally supposed, although they ran counter to earlier practices.

It would be a mistake to read in many recent or prospective changes a proof either of the fickleness of the American people or of a deficiency on their part of a national outlook toward a continuous policy. A very different interpretation points to another conclusion and to a far deeper American conservatism and stability of opinion than is commonly supposed. No people welcomes mechanical inventions more avidly than the American, or is so ready to apply novel gadgets or conveniences to their daily life. But few nations have been more suspicious or refractory to any measures making for real political changes that transcend the routine of ordinary politics

to which they are accustomed. Elementary acts of social legislation that had long ago been adopted in most European countries met with a most determined opposition in the United States before they were accepted. The difficulties that are only to-day being removed of convincing the American people that they will have to assume world responsibilities for their own security, are sufficient evidence of the deeply conservative and traditional outlook which has retarded many desirable changes and made these harder to apply than they have been in an old civilization like that of Great Britain. The unit of the average American family living in a small house in a small town is one that makes for a natural conservatism. Foreigners who are impressed by the gigantic industrial expansion of the country that meets the eye may be inclined to overlook those deeper and not always articulate social forces which make the real stability of the United States.

The search for a new sense of security both in domestic affairs and in world relations, points to the direction of the changes that are to be expected in American opinion. Different measures for social welfare may or may not be economically beneficial, different measures of armed defence or diplomatic policy may or may not be wise, but the spirit behind these is one that seeks to find a greater security. The immense interest in foreign questions which has lately swept over America indicates a novel belief that there is a better hope of avoiding trouble by participating than by abstaining from world affairs.

The crisis of depression and the tragedy of two great wars have at last hammered both of these ideas into the nation's mind. Within the space of a very few years the United States has crossed one of the greatest watersheds in its history, and is now trying to find a way to the peace of the distant plains that it sees dimly from afar.

## VI. HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF POWER

All historical changes are brought about primarily by an exercise of power, for history can be defined as a demonstration of power that is carried out by change. The human factor which directs its use will never long remain the same, for power resembles a magnet that always keeps attracting fresh and forceful elements which seek to employ it and as these approach the magnetic field they brush aside the older ones that have lost their original strength and take their place, until they also weaken and disappear in a continuous process of transformation. Inherent to all change is power, whether this emanates from blind and sudden fury or from the calmer processes of reason.

The character of power will, however, vary greatly in accordance with circumstance and necessity. During a lawless period authority rests primarily on brute force, but in more settled times it will reflect the standards of the age, whatever these may be. Power

can then be derived from the possession of wealth, or from the ownership of land, or it may depend on birth or office. In the modern practice of democratic states power is usually built up by groups of men who stand for several different and often quite unrelated activities that draw their strength from various sources, but are able to agree on some compromise and accept a common leadership. At times the use of compromise constitutes an essential part of a carefully balanced system of government, like that designed by the framers of the American Constitution. More often political power will depend on a series of provisional adjustments which are made between different groups that together form a coalition. It will then be used in accordance with the varying pressure exercised individually or jointly, and tends to follow the direction given by the strongest.

In normal times power is held in check by certain restraints of law and custom. It may also be atomized, for usually it is unevenly distributed across regions and among different classes and occupations. Primarily its use is associated with the State where the ramifications of authority descend down to the policeman's club, but it can also be sectional or emanate from institutions like Churches and Universities, or associations like trades unions. Even ceremonies, customs, and prejudices, will constitute expressions of power, for they are derived from old traditions and opinions which still carry weight. In these manifestations, great or small, open or implied, the proof of power will always be found in the nature of the changes

that it brings about or modifies or prevents, for power can be positive or negative so that it will be both separated and inseparable from change. Irrespective of everything else power, whether moral or physical, directed or instinctive, constitutes the greatest lever of action, and without the changes produced by its use history would be incomprehensible. When, therefore, we try to understand the inner causes of events, the question that always calls for an answer is to discover where the power lies that has caused these, and from what motives and out of what ingredients that power has been formed, how it has acted, and for what purposes it has been utilized. Questions of this order will apply to events in every age.

Although power is something essential to human survival it stands by itself without any connection with moral aims. Viewed as an abstraction power is a substance that is blind, naked and barren by nature, though not in its effects. Instinctively, we always associate power with something that is concrete and which conveys a much more definite meaning. This association may be impersonal, as when we speak of the power of the press or of the law, and it becomes personal when we attach it to a Stalin or a Roosevelt. As the great moving force of history, power requires to be clothed and given either a human or an institutional shape, so that naturally we connect its effect with the men who possess or appear to possess it, and who try to guide it in a conscious direction. In this way we discern in power something that is living,

although the blind instruments that are necessary to carry out its purposes will vary according to the period, so that in different ages they may be battle-axes or tanks. Whatever they are, these instruments will always respond to the hand of man, which in its turn answers to something more than the mere awareness of material superiority. What that something is might be harder to define or to agree on.

Different motives like ambition, or want, or greed, or revenge have at all times led men to seek power, and these incentives have never been very numerous nor very hard to detect. Certain aims of power are obviously selfish, others will be mixed in different degree with base or worthy motives. The wish for domination or the acquisitive desire may, according to the age, take either a political or an economic, a spiritual or a material shape and direction, but will always go together with an ambition which can only be gratified by obtaining still more power. Sometimes power is built up by a leader who has risen to authority after a successful resistance to oppression, or by the overthrow of some hated alien rule. Irrespective of the different approaches to power the clearest evidence of its nature will always be provided by the ability that it possesses to bring about change. Change therefore is both a direct result of power and also follows as a necessary consequence of its use, for the holder of power who neglects to exercise his authority, and who for one reason or another allows this to lapse or to become sterile and supine, will soon be superseded. His blunders and even his crimes may



be condoned, but inertia on the part of a leader will always be unforgivable.

Although the aims of power are singularly few the roads by which it is reached are numerous, and because they often follow the most devious ways, will be a cause for other changes. The historian may feel baffled when he stands on the bank of some Rubicon, and tries to discover how that stream has been crossed. This perplexity is, however, largely one of recent date and emanates from the modern transformation of historical methods. Ancient chroniclers did not attempt to penetrate below the surface and felt few such doubts when they related the past as if it were a picturesque pageant. Later historiographers who wrote in the grand manner to describe the doings of kings were insensitive to questions of this order. Beginning in the last century, when a greater attention was given to the history of civilization and to the growth of institutions, new theories were increasingly put forward, with many selected facts to substantiate their interpretation. Primarily they were all explanations of various kinds regarding the causes of power.

Different ages are somewhat apt to reason about the past in terms of what interests them most in the present. They forget that every period has its own problems which are never identical any more than the methods of history applied, which will vary with every age. Two favourite recent interpretations have reflected, the one, a wish for territorial aggrandizement which was most noticeable among writers in

Fascist states, the other, a concern for social questions that increasingly occupied the attention of the democracies. A school of so-called geopolitics lately came into prominence to attach a new name and a fresh vocabulary to an old subject that had fallen into some neglect. The aim of this school under Nazi direction was to bring out the significance of physical factors of geography. Unquestionably there are regions of the globe more conducive than others for the growth of power, and countries usually occupy strategical bases for the same reasons that cause them to follow certain lines of policy. Singapore, in the hands of a petty Malay chief, had been only a muddy island. Under British rule it became a vital centre for imperial communications, and under Japan it would have become an outpost for further aggression. Centuries ago it was already observed that Great Britain's insular position favoured her development of sea power. But how is one to explain that this trend should have begun only with Henry VIII, and why during the far longer period from the Saxon invasions to the advent of the Tudors should the English have displayed so slight an interest in the sea? Again, it can be pointed out that mineral resources account naturally for the great development of manufactures in countries like the United States or Germany. But in spite of abundant mining wealth China has not yet succeeded in this respect, whereas two nations entirely deficient in coal, like Sweden and Switzerland, have become industrialized by their high standard of technical education. It is

rate that any purely geographical or physical explanation of historical changes will not have to be qualified by something additional and that is dependent on other factors.

Also, the effect of climate in forming national character is unquestionable, as had already been observed by Aristotle, without the wealth of statistical observation that is now available to every theorist. The supposed indolence of the Southern races has often been contrasted with the supposed greater energy of the Northerners. A geographer like Professor Huntington, who is deeply impressed with the significance of climate, aptly points out how the same original stock of American loyalists has prospered in Canada, but deteriorated in the debilitating climate of the Bahamas, till it sank to the level of the negroes. Against this one might have to explain the remarkable intellectual force of men born in the West Indies, like Alexander Hamilton and Judah P. Benjamin, or the greater vigour of the Southern Cantonese compared with the Northern Chinese.

It is only reasonable to assume that a favourable temperature is conducive to obtaining the best results for human activity, but it hardly follows from such a truism that civilization will always take the line of certain isotherms. A recent writer on this subject, S. F. Markham, in an interesting study of the improvements made since antiquity in heating houses, which shows how these have accompanied progress, has suggested the possibility of a vast amelioration for the human race owing to the new power to

regulate temperature by air conditioning. The mastery of heat and cold means not only the control over certain physical elements in their relation to life which is beneficial, but also that mankind will become increasingly dependent on mechanical expedients that may break down in a crisis, and can hardly be universally applied. Is it to be expected that the struggle for life will always go in favour of the nation that possesses the best radiators? Mechanical devices can certainly contribute to bring about historical changes, but their significance is more likely to be felt in a negative rather than in a positive sense, and any too easy explanations of this order will lead only to a new pseudo-scientific mythology. Professor Huntington, for instance, gives some plausible reasons to show that the climate of Greece which had been extremely favourable by the tests he applied, during the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., later deteriorated at the same time as the Greeks themselves declined. He then suggests that a reason for their decay was to be looked for in the changes of climate, a theory that neglects a number of other important factors. Is one to account for the difference between Athens, and Boeotia, merely because of slight variations in their moisture and temperature? And was the acceptance of Islam as a creed due, according to this theory, to the deterioration of the climate of Arabia which predisposed men to religious change?

There is another specialized school of thought that tries to explain how historical changes take place because of epidemics and disease, so that lice

and the anopheles mosquito are responsible for much that has happened in the past. A good case can be established for occasional interpretations of this order. During the Dark Ages it happened that conquerors like Attila were halted by the 'Black Death', and in his interesting book *Rats, Lice and History*, the late Professor Zinsser, who wrote as a bacteriologist, stated that 'soldiers rarely win wars. They more often mop up the barrage of epidemics; and typhus, with plague, cholera, typhoid and dysentery has decided more campaigns than Caesar, Hannibal, Napoleon' (p. 153).

It is not impossible that the humble mosquito may have had more to do with the decay of the Roman Empire than the invasions of the Northern barbarians. Whether the depopulation of the Campagna caused malaria to spread, or the spread of malaria caused depopulation is, however, beside the point. Those who search for the reasons that brought on the fall of Rome will discover some excellent ones in the diminishing population of the capital, but they may find it hard to explain the new vigour displayed at the same time in cities like Milan and Ravenna. No single reason, least of all one that is mechanical or physical, will account for everything. Disease like death offers only a cause for the limitations that are felt by all human effort, and which at some point always detract from the power of man. A great visitation like an epidemic may suddenly arrest victory or curtail its effects, but an ordinary illness or an accident can also halt a conqueror. The

ravages of disease may throw a new light on events of the past, but even so they still leave a residue unsolved. Many different causes that affect or limit the range, direction and speed of historical change possess only one common element, and that is the fact that they are unable to explain everything. Something more that has to do with the moral nature of man will always remain, to defy any purely mechanical or physical interpretation.

Still another key to historical change can be found in food, and the answer to many riddles of the past has been looked for in the soil. The recent formation of the American 'Dustbowl' is a reminder how even to-day a population dependent on the fertility of land that has suddenly become unfruitful will be compelled by hunger to leave its homes and emigrate. The history of antiquity shows that great empires have perished when their once fertile territory was overtaken by the desert. Ur and Sumeria were kingdoms with teeming populations instead of the deserts they are to-day. Did war or pestilence weaken the cultivators of the soil so that they could no longer keep up the intricate irrigation canals? We hardly know what took place, for the encroaching sands have buried memories and preserved ruins, but left this question unanswered. We know only that the real victory fell to the desert. Cyrenaica, which now is largely an expanse of sand, was in ancient times known as the granary of Rome. The great migrations of Northern barbarians which we associate with the decay of Rome were, supposedly, caused by the

pressure of other barbarians who wanted more fertile lands, although Professor Teggert in his *Rome and China* suggests that these were due to interruptions of trade. Primitive history, and in a sense modern history, is often a search for food, and hunger has perhaps produced greater changes in the world than any other cause. But historical change means also something more than the struggle for existence.

A favourite approach in much recent interpretation of history has been through economics, whether of the Capitalist or of the Marxist schools, for both have to-day their following. Economic interpretations began with mythology, for ever since the Argonauts brought back the Golden Fleece men have been drawn to adventure by the lure of wealth. Long ago Plato observed that all wars were made for gold, and the pages of Greek and Roman history tell of bitter class struggles between rich and poor, as at Corcyra, and relate many tales of savagery and of human slavery and of the inhuman exploitation of the vanquished. In American history, only a few years ago, Professor Beard has demonstrated how the economic background of the framers of the Constitution of the United States accounted for certain of its articles. All this can be readily admitted. Yet history is something more than the story of the monster labelled Economic Man, who has lately been pushed into a too prominent foreground to explain so many things that can never be explained. Behind innumerable examples of selfishness and of greed on the part of individuals, of classes, and of nations, there are

other examples of generosity and of sacrifice, which cannot be dissociated even from the material issues at stake, and may be interwoven with the most evil causes as if to bring out the many-sided nature of man. Those who attempt to solve the riddle of history solely in clear-cut terms of economic materialism are inclined to overlook these evidences or to take them for granted as if they were negligible by-products of human behaviour. In this way they fail to explain why the spiritual and the material are so often rolled together in ways that have nothing in common.

The fallacy that lies behind all interpretations of history, whenever these are advanced as theories, is that they tend to be too absolute so that the more far-reaching and complete are their pretensions to explain events, the greater will be the margin of their error. Every age has to be studied in the light of its own life, but this is continually changing for the past cannot be regarded as something rigid and immovable that has lost all its vitality, nor can it be explained only as anticipating modern events, instead of having its special problems to solve.

The range of man is limited by the narrow horizon that stretches before him, and his aims are usually simple even if the human mind in all ages has been varied, complicated and baffling in its practices. The belief that some perfect formula exists or can ever be found to explain the intricate workings of behaviour will always lead men into error. Indeed no school of thought that tries to interpret conduct can ever be so convincing that there will not be room



for others to take its place. Sooner or later the very thoroughness of any system of philosophy must lead to its overthrow. Wilfully or instinctively there is inherent in life itself a pressing and a necessary need for change quite as mental as it is physical, and which will always worm its way through the hardest core of resistance so that political and social measures that are designed for one purpose may lead to others which are undesired by the very men who have made them possible. There is a spiral of power that when left uncontrolled can lead to future dictators acting under democratic names. The late Huey Long when asked if Fascism could come to America replied with serpent's wisdom that it could providing that it called itself anti-Fascism.

## VII. THE ROLE OF CHANGE IN FRENCH HISTORY

Revolutions are the highroads along which changes travel most rapidly. But revolution is also a word that has been widely stretched so that it conveys some very different and almost contradictory meanings. Certain upheavals like the Bolshevik were profoundly to alter conditions in Russia by remodelling the pattern of its life, whereas other revolutionary movements have had only a restricted or a fleeting significance. The importance of revolutions when regarded as landmarks can easily be more apparent

than real, and it will often be questionable if similar results might not have been attained with less violence by leaving changes to the slower processes of time. The immediate effect of any revolution, apart from a frequent destructiveness, is usually to release some fresh energy and bring to the fore some new leadership rather than to exploit novel ideas. In times of crisis ideas are more likely to be the expedients that are employed by the ambitious primarily to serve as avenues to success. Men accept uncritically the slogans of their day either because they are carried away by them with unreasoning enthusiasm, or more often out of sheer opportunism. As Thucydides observed, leaders have to be judged not so much in the light of their declarations as by the manner in which these are linked with other purposes that can be utilized for power. Political calculation led Constantine to make a State religion of Christianity, and caused Henry of Navarre to enter the Church of Rome. Religion in the sixteenth century, Liberty in the French Revolution, economic and social shibboleths to-day, have all made their appeal to human passions more than to reason. Their slogans have been used as instruments for the ambitious, for whenever catchwords arouse popular enthusiasm they offer a tactical usefulness. This helps to explain why revolutions are sometimes much less revolutionary than appears on the surface.

Long ago historians pointed out that many of the changes that are attributed to the French Revolution were already well on their way and might have been

carried out by orderly processes without any of the crimes committed. Violence is often only a high premium that is paid to speed reforms, but men resort to it particularly against governments with weak means but firm desires to keep situations static in the name of a supposed stability. The desire for permanence of any regime defeats its own purpose when it makes no allowance for something else later taking its place, and tries to freeze an order indefinitely. No ruler has ever created a deeper impression of stability than did Louis XIV. After the disorders of the *Fronde*, he succeeded in stamping an age with a mould made after his own design that aimed to establish one law and one religion under the royal authority. He revoked the Edict of Nantes to bring about national unity, and France was divided to make it uniform. In its heyday no political edifice ever seemed to be built on so firm a foundation as the French Monarchy under the Sun King. In the end none was to prove so weak. The stronger appears to be the structure of a State, the more completely will it crumble after its hidden fissures are widened by the concealed forces of disruption and the foundation has been undermined. The disorders of the French Revolution might never have been so violent, the break it made with the past so entire, nor the collapse of the ancient Kingdom so complete, if the edifice that was seemingly so firmly erected by Louis XIV had been less rigid. Whenever behind an impressive exterior the normal flow of change is artificially held back, a kind of sclerosis will set in

that replaces strength by stiffness, till sooner or later the good in the system is destroyed along with the bad. Before the political structure of the French Monarchy was shattered by revolution, it had already been silently sapped from within.

Few events take place without considerable preparation, and the slow and unnoticed disintegration of an established order usually begins like dry rot. Tocqueville observed that in 1789 the French laws and institutions were still the same as thirty years earlier, but during this interval the spirit of the nation and the manner in which these laws were interpreted had silently changed. The ancient monarchy at that time was largely a façade, although the surface had hardly been altered. The symbolism of the storming of the Bastille would, however, be incomplete if one did not remember that except for a few common law offenders the famous stronghold was then empty. The hollowness of what had once been the most powerful Kingdom in Europe became apparent only when the walls of that ancient citadel crumbled in their own dust.

In times of revolution emotion can attain a pitch that borders on hysteria, and makes for a violence which is never of long duration. Extravagances of opinion and act then follow each other in a vertical ascent that later subsides even more precipitously with the return of order. In the early enthusiasm of the French Revolution men had freely offered their lives to defend liberty with the cry of 'death to the tyrants'. Ten years later the same men found nothing

anomalous in offering their lives for a self-made Emperor who by that time had suppressed every vestige of liberty. Another ten years passed, and these men for the most part were quite as ready to swear allegiance to a Bourbon king who professed to rule by divine right. Within the lifetime of a single generation the world was to witness such contradictory phenomena of human change as the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Era, and the Holy Alliance, each professing to inaugurate a different age that was founded on the most opposite principles. The influence of all three movements was to survive in France under other forms, less owing to their historic antecedents than because the ideals of the revolution, the Caesarism of mass leadership, and the Conservative stability which is supposedly associated with any reaction, have been beliefs that will always exist and are in a sense complementary to each other. This helps us to understand why the rapid alternation of three contradictory systems has been so frequent a phenomenon in French history. To dub an age by any name merely because it professes to describe some temporarily dominant order to the exclusion of whatever else remains hidden or suppressed underneath will at best provide a convenient label, but is more often a misnomer which neglects other forces that one day will bring the age to an end.

Political changes can therefore be less significant than their surface appearance might suggest. The test which has to be applied is found not in the outward designation of the state so much as it is in the actual

nature of the relations which a government maintains with the governed. These will vary immensely in different countries, for much depends on prevailing customs and the force of traditions as well as on institutions that reflect the national character. The authority of a government may in certain states be firmly built on secure foundations and in others it will be only superimposed by an act of force. Between these two extremes there can be many intermediate variations. Under a surface gloss that reflects every change often in a false light, the real life of a nation goes on, even during periods of crisis, usually much the same as before. Since the Revolution successions of different governments in France have each in their day announced the most opposite programmes, but the measures which they introduced hardly touched the great mass of the population. This may have happened either because politics in the past had never been a major interest for most Frenchmen, or because the French people, having found a suitable pattern of existence, remained content to allow the outward expression of political power to be struggled for by an ambitious few, in their belief that the really important things of life would, after all, not be very different, irrespective of who ruled them.

In spite of frequent changes, France presented the paradox of being at once the most revolutionary and the most conservative country in Europe, for underneath a stormy surface the nation remained substantially unaltered. Only the outward pattern varied, as different political creeds fought for ascendancy. In

these contests the struggle for power always proceeded on the usually justified assumption that the victor would be able to count on a more or less indifferent mass support. Authority was in this way repeatedly and suddenly transferred from one group to another only rarely encountering any considerable opposition. Beginning with the 18th of Brumaire, a fresh change of regime took place in 1814, twice in 1815, again in 1830, in 1848, in 1851 and then in 1870. Bonaparte boasted that he had picked up the crown in the gutter, but except for the return of the Bourbons behind the victorious allies, Napoleon's *coup d'état*, the *bourgeois* revolution of 1830, the social revolution of 1848, the Caesarism of Napoleon III that collapsed at Sedan, were all of them acts of successful audacity carried out by small groups of men who knew that they could impose their will by counting on the easy submission of a somewhat indifferent nation. Save for the *coup d'état* of 1940, which, because of the German occupation, took place at Bordeaux, the other revolutions all began in Paris, either as the result of military conspiracy or of mob agitation. Yet the real life of the nation was rarely affected by these events for any length of time. Frenchmen, more particularly those living in the provinces, were willing to accept almost any government, even one established by a small minority, so long as their lives and their property were not endangered, and their customary existence left undisturbed. Only the Commune, in 1870, led to a sanguinary repression because it threatened private property.

This easy acquiescence in different forms of government came from the fact that in spite of many announced declarations of the great changes proposed which invariably were proclaimed by every new regime but which not many Frenchmen took seriously, there have probably been fewer social alterations in the structure of life in France since the first Revolution than in that of any other western European country. The adage *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose* aptly describes what repeatedly took place, and the pattern of the French family with its sober discipline and its frugality went on little disturbed by outside political events. Only the pale attempt made by Marshal Pétain at the most inopportune time and under the most humiliating conditions to revive the absolutism of Louis XIV, and of Napoleon, without being his own master and without either the prestige of the royal crown or the glory of the Emperor's victories, will long cast discredit on all authoritarian ideas that emanate from the Right.

The moral collapse of 1940 can at least partly be explained because not a few men of property then preferred a ruler whose will was law even if his name was Hitler, to a government by their own Left. To this extent it may be predicted that the Vichy experiment of failure will throw its shadow on a party which has become associated in the popular mind with the stigma of disaster, for the Communists who were not without their share of blame will have been saved by Moscow. Whatever else may happen in France for many years to come, there can be no revival



of a government by the Right, and future changes must for some time be expected to take place in an opposite direction. Just as 1848 completed the first cycle of revolution that had begun in 1789, it is not unlikely that the collapse of Pétainism will be followed by another and perhaps protracted period of disturbance before a new stability is found again in France.

#### VIII. THE CHARACTER OF POLITICAL CHANGE

The significance of political change in so far as it is a register of public opinion can easily be exaggerated, but it would be difficult to think of any great transformation in the history of nations that was not reflected at some stage or at some point by some public act that served as a barometer. Such acts may take a variety of forms, for boycotts or strikes can be as efficacious as battles or legislative enactments. Political action may also take place in the open or remain underground as with the *Carbonari* or the Ku Klux Klan. By studying aims and forces that are avowed or hidden, a careful observer should be able to predict the broad direction of the changes ahead. The ideas of the multitude are rarely mysterious except to those who will not take the pains to understand them, and they form a necessary complement to a leader's ambition. As Polybius has observed, it is easy to err over the estimate of time, but one ought

rarely to be mistaken regarding the stage of growth, or of decline reached, or the form which change should take.

In normal times the swing of the pendulum suggests the customary oscillations to be expected in political change, but these will indicate neither the range nor the duration of what is to follow. Periods of history that are stained by lawless violence may be brief or protracted, but sooner or later these will always be succeeded by other periods of greater security which are marked by a return to conservatism, perhaps under a different form. After the anarchy that accompanied the Wars of the Roses had completed the destruction of the Medieval order, men accepted Henry Tudor as King, although he possessed barely a shred of legality to his claim. The liberty-loving Englishman welcomed the new absolutism, partly because he could not do otherwise, but also because the sudden enormous increase of royal power represented in his belief the only way to attain a much needed order and stability. In every age disorder has always ended by the triumph of some fresh leader who offers a nation the security that most men desire but which he also requires for himself in order to buttress his own rule. The people will be grateful for the peace which they owe him, the prizes of victory will be distributed among his supporters, who at once become conservative pillars of authority, and, if the new leader is able to display some moderation in his measures and achieve some prosperity for the country, most of his former opponents will be

quickly reconciled. With some of these tactics in mind both Mussolini and Hitler had begun by deliberately creating disorder, fomenting violence and inventing dangers that no longer existed, the better to crush their adversaries and obtain the support of the propertied classes who welcomed their restoration of order.

Certain antecedent conditions, however, are necessary before such things can happen. Countries that have gone through the agonies of frustration and defeat, and have then suffered from poverty, humiliation and despair, become easily receptive to the appeal for drastic changes if these hold out a promise of betterment. The Nazi party, for instance, in its early development had pursued a somewhat fluctuating curve of growth that included two periods of sharp decline, both of which coincided with the economic amelioration of Germany. Later a vast increase in unemployment that followed the world depression led to Nazi gains. Hitler's fortunes were in fact built on his countrymen's misfortunes, for without the unemployed who swelled his ranks and welcomed any change, it is questionable if his emotional exploitation of the Treaty of Versailles would have proved sufficient.

The worse the situation is in a country the better is the opportunity offered to any plausible leader who can further his own ambitions under cover of the remedies he advances to fit the circumstances of the time. The changes which he proposes will be put forward as original, but invariably they are old

expedients that under different names have been employed before. Sometimes a programme helps to bring about a revolution, sometimes a leader, like Napoleon, will only need to exploit the disorder of a revolution that is already on the wane. No system of authority can ever be devised that is indestructible, and when a political edifice has been sufficiently weakened or a government becomes sufficiently detached from the people so that it no longer commands respect or support and lacks even the power to enforce its authority, as happened in China before the revolution, and in Italy before Fascism, it invites disruption. Changes then follow rapidly, whether they come from within or are imposed from without. In wartime and during periods of crisis, the authoritarian direction of these changes is usually towards the Right even when measures are proposed by the Left and suggested seemingly in the people's interest. Drastic changes which take place in peace time often come from the Left as the result of mass pressure. A successful popular leader may later veer towards the Right, nominally to carry out better a radical programme that will serve to entrench his authority. Mussolini's career was no exception to this rule.

In countries like Spain that have neither had sound leadership nor possess a firm tradition of political opinion, radical changes can take place with a baffling rapidity, often amid considerable confusion, before a new stability has been reached. The order then established may be largely fictitious and create a mistaken impression of a strength that is imposed

only by force. Many people will always be ready to believe the boastful assertions of self-decreed saviours of society just as they once accepted Napoleon III's professions and forgot the crimes by which he climbed to power. Dictators must express a desire for order and the sanctity of the family. This meets with the approval of vested interests and of those members of the propertied classes who, misled by lying assurances, dread the effects of social change, fear revolution, and do not understand that there may be a graver danger in relying on the use of illegal force than in the perils which they try to avoid. Such people remain blind to the risk of wars that are made to distract attention from internal difficulties and win the easy successes that are necessary for these regimes. They are attracted by the hope of stern repression against social elements they dislike and in this way they have helped in some countries to drive underground the demand for change and have made it revolutionary.

## IX. VARIATIONS OF HISTORICAL CHANGE

In periods of rapid political change old forms are often maintained even when quite different meanings are attached to them. Nothing is more likely to throw dust in the popular mind than for a would-be dictator to profess respect for institutions with which a nation is already familiar, and use well-known catchwords that will always be popular in order to create the

impression that he intends no real change. Marmont, in his *Memoirs*, relates that a general he knew, after the 18th of Brumaire, fearing that the Republic was in grave danger, intended to march at once on Paris, so as to preserve liberty. The general's apprehensions were only allayed when he learned that nothing was changed as Bonaparte did not propose to take any other office than the one he already held of Consul. There are times when great changes can most easily be effected under cover of contrary words. Machiavelli has described a prince who spoke always of peace when he thought only of war, and we have also witnessed similar examples of such inverted roles when the men who most desired peace were pilloried as war-mongers.

There are times when moderation can hasten the outbreak of disorder, and the pages of history tell of many a Kerensky who by his weakness has paved the way for revolution. On the other hand, after violence has spent its force, when no decisive solution is in sight, and a protracted struggle begins to weigh heavily on both sides, a display of moderation and a readiness to compromise will be the essence of statesmanship. This was the secret of Henry of Navarre's triumph. In war as in peace the art of government is largely one of understanding what methods and measures are most appropriate to each occasion and to judge when the time has come to apply the proper remedy.

Irrespective of its cause, disorder always signifies a break from the normal rhythm of change. As soon

as violence begins, the beat of this rhythm becomes irregular and subject to interruptions and convulsions. Whenever this happens and the State is no longer able to maintain order, the prestige of its former authority disappears, and a government will be faced with the dilemma either of consenting to its own abdication or of employing devices of questionable legality in a last effort to preserve its waning power. This has happened repeatedly in Spain and Greece.

In times of disorder the sanction of power has little to do with its origin or its title but much with the strength at its command and the popular approval on which it can count. The purpose that lies behind every change in a revolution is always the hope of establishing something better which will be more permanent even when, to attain this desired stability, resort is had to force. Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries alike are prone to forget that no order can ever be permanent, for no rule can at once be living and embalmed. The statesman's goal must be aimed at somewhere between these opposites, but the speed and the character of the measures which he tries to carry out will always vary enormously. As a rule changes are much more gradual and occur less violently in countries that preserve a liberal tradition of government and possess institutions which are sufficiently elastic for innovations to take place by orderly processes. Since 1830, the history of England has, perhaps, been marked by greater domestic reforms than that of France, but these have been distributed over a hundred years instead of being

compressed into a number of brief and spasmodic revolutions. The goal of any real stability must always allow for continuous change, a circumstance which helps to explain why government is an art and not a science. Authority is an art that has to do with men who live in a continuous flux, and the task which confronts statesmen is how to deepen and widen the channels through which the living flow of change must pass and never to try to confine the current by raising unnecessary barriers.

The test of any regime's real strength must be looked for primarily in times of adversity and peril. When the roots of authority lie deep in the soil many changes may occur on the surface but the State can still preserve its character even after reverses and disasters that would wreck a government of insecure foundation. Napoleon, aptly, remarked to his father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria, that the latter could surmount a hundred defeats when a single one would overthrow his own self-made throne.

History, which relates the experience of men in action, also points out many different ways in which changes can occur or be induced. The range covered is as wide as history itself, for change is the essential condition without which there can be no history. To follow only the surface chronicle of events is to miss much of real significance of the past. Long ago Polybius observed that history is concerned less with what men have done than with the reasons why they have done it. These reasons can also extend far beyond any recognized frontiers of historical fact and have



to be interpreted at times in the light of extraordinary circumstances. The Japanese claim of descent from the Gods is an instance of the association that exists even to-day between the mythical and the living. Nazi racialism, which had altered German life, was a pseudo-science that misapplied a learned jargon, wilfully distorted scientific evidence, and claimed as established facts the most questionable theories that could be brought forward to flatter the vanity of the German people.

The use of the lie as an instrument of policy is not peculiar to any age, and innumerable examples of it can be found in the pages of history. The only ground for recent surprise was to discover that the high standard of education which had before prevailed in the *Reich* should have proved of so little use in resisting the crudities put forward by a lying propaganda which defended crime in the name of a largely fictitious biology. Racialism was, however, part of an anti-intellectual policy that was designed to justify the destruction of adversaries and to increase the terror inspired by a deliberate reversion to tribal savagery. The historian who studies this phenomenon may be struck by the analogy that Nazi Germany has presented to certain lower forms of biological life who are born in possession of a vertebra, but lose this when they revert to a more primitive condition.

A narrow tribal creed can help artificially to restrict many of the normal processes of change. Such a policy can, however, only be successful when a people is prepared to cut itself off from its neigh-

hours and retire into its shell, as happened formerly in Japan. If instead it aims at expansion by conquest, a policy of racial segregation, especially when it is associated with the use of brutality and cruelty, will greatly add to the difficulties of the task and in this way contribute to thwart its purpose. Nazi crimes have had the effect of uniting all their enemies in a common hatred, and by inciting the occupied countries to revolt have imposed on the Germans a much greater effort at repression than would otherwise have been necessary. The changes which Hitler tried to introduce signified far too violent a break with the past ever to be easily accepted by other nations. They ran counter to the normal flow of life in other countries and they failed to mingle with their deeper currents. Expressed in plain human terms it was simple to foresee that whenever men are degraded and reduced to serfdom they will seize the first opportunity to overthrow their masters. The Germans will long have ground bitterly to regret their crimes, for the ruthlessness of which Hitler boasted also helped to bring about his downfall.

The great reason why the *Fuehrer* stood so near to success was because he came at a time of lowered standards when politicians and democratic institutions had been widely discredited, when normal moral defences had everywhere been weakened, when nations were divided and when the very idea of war had become deeply repugnant. Hitler then had before him the greatest opportunity that was ever given to mortal man to change political Europe and by intro-

ducing a real new order to unify a continent. He had at his disposal all the force that was necessary to make this change, but not the moral elevation or the width of mind. If, instead of aiming at the degradation and the destruction of his victims, he had followed the same liberal direction that was taken by German democrats in 1848, his task would have been infinitely easier. The real lesson of successful imperialism is one of tolerance and understanding, and of that respect for human dignity which allowed Macedonian and Roman, Mogul and Manchu conquerors to govern vast empires with relative ease.

#### X. THE GREEK VIEW OF CHANGE

The Ancients related of a tyrant of Syracuse, that on one occasion he had entered a temple and found there an old peasant woman praying audibly to the gods for his long life. The tyrant listened to her with some astonishment, for he knew that his many cruelties had made him hated by his subjects. As the old woman did not recognize him, he asked her why she prayed for the safety of a despot so notorious. She answered that in the course of a long life she had known many tyrants, but as each one was worse than his predecessor, she preferred the present evils.

The philosopher Heraclitus maintained that at the end of a certain period the earth would be consumed by fire, but afterwards it would enter a new cycle

and a series of endless revolutions, for all things existed in a perpetual flow. The Greeks were inclined to see events in the light of a recurring cycle, which was not without bearing an analogy to changes in the seasons. Their view contained a background of superstition and, perhaps, primitive belief, that was tinged with some exotic influence. Every Greek thought that at times visible signs were given to men by the Gods, and in the first century of our era Plutarch found nothing unusual in quoting, with evident respect, the opinions of Tuscan soothsayers, in order to explain what he called the great cycles of history. In a curious passage in his *life of Sulla*, he wrote: 'From a cloudless and clear sky there came the sound of a trumpet so shrill and mournful that by reason of the greatness thereof men were beside themselves and crouched for fear. The Tuscan seers interpreted this to portend the commencement of a new period and a general change. They say that there are in all eight periods, which differ in mode of life and habits altogether from one another, and to each period is assigned by the deity a certain number of years determined by the revolution of a great year. When a period is completed, the commencement of another is indicated by some wondrous sign on the earth or from the heavens, so as to make it immediately evident to those who attend to such matters and have studied them that men are now adopting other habits and modes of life, and are more, or less, an object of care to the gods than the men of former periods. They say in

the change from one period to another, there are great alterations....Now that is what the Tuscan wise men said who are supposed to know more of such things than anybody else.’\*

In the narrower application of change to political practices, Plato shared the customary Greek belief that the course of history proceeded in a continuous cycle, since nothing was everlasting. He offered an explanation for this by suggesting a curious connection between change and the groupings of certain numbers. His conclusion was reached by a process of reasoning that is far from clear and probably depended on attributing to numbers a somewhat arbitrary and mystical sense which we find difficult to follow. What stands out from his political ideas is that Plato, who was not averse to dabbling in politics when the occasion offered in Sicily, had acquired a pronounced dislike for Athenian democracy because of its continuous changes, and perhaps more particularly after the judicial murder of Socrates. In contrast to the popular rule, which he detested, Plato took kindly to the honours that were showered upon him by the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius II, who doubtless listened with pleasure to his philosophic opinions. As a model state, Plato designed a Republic that was to be governed by philosopher guardians who were to do everything for the people but allow very little to be done by the people. The philosopher’s statecraft was based on what would to-day be called a policy of collective planning carried

\* *Lives*, vol. II, p. 324 (edit. Bohn).

out by technical experts. All this was in glaring contrast with the varying and intermittent practices of Athenian democracy, that caused Plato to write, 'the probable outcome of too much freedom is only too much slavery in the individual and the State'.

Where Plato regarded the existing laws and usages with some scorn, Aristotle, whose opinions were at once democratic and conservative, advised the greatest caution in making any changes. He had seen far too many changes taking place in the Greek City States whose constitutions he had carefully studied. In spite of the affectionate respect in which he held his master, he enjoyed picking faults in Plato, and criticizing him for inaccuracies that were contained in certain of his political observations. Plato, for instance, had attributed revolutions to the fact that nothing was ever permanent, and had then described the cycle of change as a pattern that progressed continuously from the perfect state through oligarchy to democracy, and then from democracy to tyranny, until the circle was completed by a return to the perfect state. Aristotle remarked that Plato did not discuss the subject of revolution well, and gave chapter and verse to prove that the order of progression which the latter had mentioned was far from being exact. He quoted instances to show how at times one tyranny had succeeded another tyranny, while at Chalcis oligarchy followed a tyranny and at Syracuse a tyranny was succeeded by a democracy (*Politics*, v, x, 1-3).

The Greeks hardly ever went beyond the range of

their own experiences, and took little interest in the practices of the despised barbarians. In their City States they were familiar with the three great forms of government—monarchy, aristocracy and democracy—and they were realistic enough to understand that each type possessed its particular merits and faults; for each could easily degenerate into a more vicious form by the mere passage of time, which was the real cause of change. With his keen penetration Aristotle had analysed every form as well as the different causes that led to disturbance and change. Upheavals might come either from men who regarded themselves as under-privileged, or from ambitious men who were no longer content to share equality with those whom they regarded as their inferiors. There also were times when men in office showed so much arrogance and greed that people rose in revolt against constitutions that afforded opportunity for such conduct (*Politics*, v, ii, 1-3).

The constitution of Carthage was the only non-Hellenic one which found favour with Aristotle, perhaps because it most nearly resembled that of Sparta. The philosopher thought well of many Carthaginian laws and practices, and gave as proof of their merit that in a properly regulated state the populace willingly remain faithful to the constitutional system, and at Carthage neither civil strife had arisen, in any degree worth mentioning, nor yet a tyrant.

It seemed in the natural order of things, and even beneficial, to Aristotle, that Greeks should make

slaves of barbarians, nor did slavery appear to him as incompatible with his own preference for democratic institutions and a middle-class government that was near to the people. His vision never went outside the Hellenic world. True enough, he recognized in monarchy the type of authority which was least likely to be overthrown; but in his opinion monarchy was something too remote, and he observed that new kingdoms no longer came into existence, since men were much alike and there were too few individuals of recognized eminence.

Aristotle had been the tutor of Alexander and during a period of his life had lived in Macedon. He was a close friend of the Vice-Regent Antipater, and must have known the principal military leaders of that State. At the same time as he was planning improvements for the constitutions of the Greek city republics, the systems of government which he described in his *Politics* had reached their end without his even suspecting that this had happened. He appears to have had no suspicion that Greece was so soon to become a Macedonian province. The greatest intellect, perhaps, of any age, although deeply interested in politics, was singularly blind to impending events. He certainly failed to foresee the consequences to Hellenic life of his pupil's conquests, or to understand the grandeur of Alexander's idea to fuse Europe with Asia, or to see that the partition of the Eastern world among the conqueror's generals would lead to the establishment of new dynasties in the new kingdoms that were to be carved out of his empire.



Perhaps the greatest difference between the Hellenic and the modern view of political change emanates from the fact that the Greeks laboured under few illusions as to the superior merit of any one system. The attitude displayed by their thinkers toward the three different forms of government with which they were familiar usually inclined to a tolerant scepticism based on a measured judgment with a mild advocacy or disapproval rather than any whole-hearted support or condemnation. The passions which they exhibited in their politics were not reflected in their thoughts. As they were convinced that nothing was permanent, it followed that many things were bound to happen within the accepted variations of political change. Greek thinkers cherished few dreams regarding the ability of any system to lead men to a golden age, the very memory of which had been relegated to a mythical past.

Aristotle had criticized the Spartan education on the ground that as its aim was domination its practices were pointless once their Empire had ceased to exist. After Macedonian rule gave way to Roman, it was inevitable for the Greeks to contrast their weakness with the strength of a city that Aristotle had not even thought worthy of mention. It was left for Polybius to point out the political character of the Roman system. He had first described the customary three forms of government which existed in the Hellenic world and how they followed each other in a continuous succession. This happened whenever the evils of one system became too oppressive, be-

cause it was inevitable in the course of time that any type of government would alter to a more vicious form. Polybius retained some of Plato's prejudice against democracy, for he wrote that when the people listen to the flattery of demagogues and obtain the lion's share, 'the State will change its name to the finest sounding of all, freedom and democracy, but will change its nature to the worst of all, mob rule'. The cycle of political evolution, he saw, was 'a course appointed by nature in which constitutions change, disappear, and finally return to the point from which they started.... Anyone who has observed how each form naturally arises and develops will also be able to see when, how, and where, the growth, perfecting, change and end of each is likely to occur again.'

The mixed form of government was hardly known to the Greeks, although Aristotle remarked that the more mixed a constitution was the more permanent it would be. Polybius, however, had been deeply impressed by the success of mixed government in Rome, where he observed that it was impossible for anyone to say with certainty if the system was aristocratic, democratic, or monarchical. He pointed out, as a fact beyond dispute, that in less than fifty-three years, the Romans had succeeded in subjecting nearly the entire inhabited world to their rule and they possessed an empire not only immeasurably greater than any which had preceded it, but which needed to fear no rivalry for the future. Writing in the second century B.C., the Greek historian described the world

horizon as having been suddenly enlarged, so that history was no longer a disconnected subject, but had become an organic whole, in which the affairs of Italy and Africa were now closely bound up with those of Greece and Asia. Future historians henceforth would have to establish the connection and relationship which all these events bore to each other.

Polybius foresaw that in time even Rome must decline, and he explained the reasons that would lead to its decay; but unfortunately that portion of his work is no longer extant. The power of Rome created, however, an impression of finality on the Greek mind in much the same way as Hitler's 'Thousand Year New Order' would have done to many men in the occupied countries if Germany had been victorious. With the loss of Hellenic independence it must have seemed without purpose to discuss cycles of political changes that no longer took place. The forms taken by Greek thought assumed a different shape when, owing to Macedonian victories, the influence of Hellenic culture became far stronger, even if freedom had perished. The greatest political idea of the Hellenic genius was then developed by an obscure philosopher who aimed to take the Greeks out of their conceited parochialism and to open fresh horizons in which Hellenes and barbarians were to stand as equals. Not unnaturally, his views met with little favour among the Athenians, whose pride of race survived political extinction. But they were to influence many of the best of the Macedonian rulers and administrators.

It is something of a paradox that the philosophy of two great thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, was to exercise a less direct guidance over ancient life than did the tenets of a little known Cypriot like Zeno, who was accused by his scoffing contemporaries at Athens of filching something of his doctrine from every quarter. Stoic philosophy was at first tinged with communism, but soon discarded certain of its early extravagances to develop a creed of universal brotherhood with a doctrine of humanity that saw in mankind the children of one father and the citizens of one state, founded on a conception of equality for all men which later entered Roman law. A philosophy of this character was admirably suited to endow Roman imperialism with a lofty ideal. Ministers like Seneca, emperors like Marcus Aurelius, were Stoics in the best meaning of the word. With their strong practical sense the Romans utilized men of different races for the administration of the Empire as if to illustrate the universality of Rome.

The time had long gone by when the Greeks could regard history as a recurring cycle of change. After the second century of our era the great Roman Empire, as it passed through repeated convulsions, became less and less stable until its long-threatened disruption culminated in Alaric's sack of Rome. Then came a new search for peace and some found spiritual rest within the haven of St Augustine's *City of God*. Implied in this was the recognition of political impotence, which urged men to look to the consolation of faith as a refuge for the soul.

## XI. FAITH AND HISTORICAL CHANGE

The refuge of men in the presence of great tragedies is usually toward faith. Human beings, when they stand in the presence of grave danger, will look to something above them and many will find in their belief a consolation in times when no rational explanation is possible for their suffering. People then discover in religion something that is greater and more enduring than themselves. This craving is eternal although the manner by which it is approached makes for an expression that will always be different. When men are harassed by doubts they will ask themselves the same questions and be tormented by the same fears but the answers they receive may not be the same. Like every living force, expressions of faith have undergone through the ages many changes in their inspiration as well as in their effects. It is possible to envisage faith either as a religious belief or as the moving power behind some doctrine that has nothing in common with the ordinary meaning of a creed. Religion is usually regarded as a subject that is separate and distinct from the customary workings of historical change, but this is far from being correct either in an organizational or in a functional sense. Religious practices can reflect an age quite as much as political usages.

A modern fallacy that tends to connect faith with an ethical purpose makes us prone to forget the earlier association which existed between primitive religion and magic, or that religious rites were

originally carried out in order to propitiate evil spirits. Much of the best but also much of the worst of human action can be traced to the influence of faith through the ages. Instinctively we associate religion with acts of piety and good deeds, although the pages of history show how faith has also been the cause of much savage cruelty and bloodshed. One need only think of the Crusades, and of the Wars of Religion, and of the many massacres that have been committed in the name of a creed. Again and again faith has proved a great dynamic force that has led to immense changes taking place in history which were carried out all the more ruthlessly because they were achieved under the sanction of a religious cause.

There is a striking contrast between the modern attitude displayed toward faith and the early Christian one as expressed by St Jerome, and expounded by St Augustine in the *City of God* at a time not altogether dissimilar from the world of to-day, when barbarians from the Hyrcanian forest were threatening to destroy ancient civilization. Fifteen centuries ago when the crumbling Roman Empire was being sacked and pillaged by German invaders and the Imperial City had fallen into their rude hands, St Jerome, hearing of this disaster and aghast before the destructive rage of the barbarians, quoted Virgil that though he had a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths and a voice of iron, yet they could never be enough to condemn all the horrors committed (Letter CXXIII). The theologian in St Jerome tried to find a reason for these calamities and discovered it in the fierce anger of

God using the fury of barbarians as the instrument of his wrath to chastise the Romans for their sins. Nor did St Augustine find anything amiss that the righteous should suffer since their souls would benefit. The fall of Rome, which to St Augustine seemed like the downfall of the world, would enable Christian hearts to seek an opportunity to transfer to heaven the goods they had hoped to store on this earth (Letter CXXII). The *City of God* was to provide the refuge for those who suffered in this world.

Such explanations as these may not altogether have convinced the Church Fathers and still less will any similar reasoning satisfy people to-day, who are not saints and find themselves unable to understand how by any system of divine justice those who are blameless should have to suffer so cruelly. Poles and Norwegians, Dutch and Greeks, who died or have lived in concentration camps through years of anguished pain and danger must have asked themselves this question. Religion may at times console the afflicted, but the staunchest faith finds it difficult to explain why so many inoffensive victims have had to suffer so cruelly and how such crimes could be perpetrated with seeming impunity. It is not enough to foretell impending retribution or repeat the old adage about the mills of the gods grinding slowly, for obviously no future punishment can relieve the agony of martyred populations or restore the tortured dead to life. To declare that the paths of Providence are mysterious and that the designs of the Creator remain inscrutable is only to give a religious sanction

to a conclusion of stupefied doubt similar to the one which the unbeliever reaches by somewhat different processes.

How are we then to account for this fundamental change that has taken place in our conception of faith? One reason why most men feel unable to reconcile these iniquities with the existence of a divine order, and why even the halting explanation of St Jerome seems so futile, is because there are few to-day who still retain the poignant sense of sin which had characterized earlier ages of simpler belief. A great change has in fact come over the modern idea of faith. It goes against the grain of our conscience to attribute the suffering of the innocent to the circumstance that like hostages they are to be punished for other men's misdeeds. Perhaps not many educated people any longer believe in the same way as men believed in ages of more orthodox faith that a personal God has created man in his own image. The influence that faith exercises in life has altered its character. But it would be very far from the truth to allege that this want of a ready-made acquiescence in the literal interpretation of ancient creeds, or the wide indifference that now prevails on the part of the laity to dogma, implied an absence of belief in spiritual values or indeed in religion itself, and that our mechanized world has become only a godless jungle in which divinity can find no place.

It may even be possible that out of the present chaos a great spiritual change can follow with consequences for humanity that cannot yet be



measured. It would, however, be a profession of atheism for the human soul to accept cruelty and wickedness as evils that are inevitable and, perhaps, even justified under some preordained design, the obscurity or intricacy of which man felt unable to fathom. To take the view that these evils are only ruthless happenings such as must be expected from any purely biological view of our existence and that in their cosmic significance human beings are little more than struggling bacteria devouring each other under a divine microscope would be a negation of God. A resigned fatalism and the complacent acceptance of savagery are perhaps two different expressions for the same thing. But the measure of our indignation, the pity felt in our hearts, and the hope of a betterment that men instinctively cherish and strive for, bear witness to the presence of an inward feeling which points to something that also makes for faith.

Undoubtedly it is not easy to discover in the old religious doctrines any satisfying explanation for the suffering which is visited upon the innocent. No creed really answers this question unless it be that of Zoroaster, with its principle of an eternal struggle between good and evil. The inability to find a convincing reply may be less a fault with religion than with the changing interpretation that is given to its message as this is applied to the experience of men. One reason why such confusion exists is because of the misunderstanding that occurs whenever in different ages, in different nations, and among different

men, different meanings have been attached to the same word. Apart from those faithful souls who still retain an orthodox belief which leads them in obedience and humility to accept their rigid creed, few individuals are able to interpret in identical terms a feeling which is so deep as religion and which has no other common element than that of faith.

Like every belief that is attached to something living, every religion has passed through many changes in the course of its history. There is no necessity to seek here the difficult definition of what religion really is, or what it has stood for in different ages, but only to suggest how this confusion has occurred which must add to our perplexity. For, in the belief of many, religion is something that is independent of the existence of man since God existed before man, whereas others again will think of religion as something that began with the birth of man. And because of this divergence, faith clusters, as it were, between two poles which are sometimes near and sometimes far apart, sometimes very close to the spirit and sometimes unexpectedly savage and earthy. The very nature of religion is of a faith that is continually changing, for at different times it may draw close to what can be either divine or evil. When theologians argue that a creed is something more than morality they speak truly though not always in the sense which they mean. They think rather of dogma than of St Paul's words on charity. But many men know that when religion is untempered by mercy it can become cruel and hideous. Primitive man

worshipped gods that were shaped in his own image and as savage as himself except that they were made of sticks and stones. Indeed the gods even of nations that were highly organized into great communities, like the Aztec, demanded human sacrifice. The spiritual history of mankind is therefore one of continuous changes and of transformations that, as in the case of the Jews, have elevated a once tribal, cruel and vindictive god who ordered the slaughter of the Amalekites into a universal Deity. If this process of spiritual change should suddenly once more be reversed, and if as a consequence faith should again become localized and narrowed, it would mean that the tribal gods had been restored to their ancient savage ritual, and that the world had gone back to its early barbarism.

If we accept this view it is easier to understand why many of our present evils are to be associated with the return to a primeval faith which would have changed mankind. Indeed until we find the cause how is it possible to discover the remedy? The fanatical character of a savage religion was inherent in the faith of the Nazis, its primitive character not more universally recognized only because that aspect of Hitler's rule had been so largely veiled under a highly competent technical equipment. A modern mechanized efficiency served to conceal the true nature of Moloch that reappeared in the *Fuehrer*.

It has been the tragedy of our age that at a time when civilized practices were gaining favour in other countries, the Germans were imbued with the con-

viction that statecraft and morality had nothing in common. The moral background of politics was forgotten or distorted and a belief that the greatness of the *Reich* could only be achieved by war was interwoven with a belief in the superiority of the Germanic race, until these two convictions grew into a creed. When the Weimar Republic fell into disrepute, Hitler disentangled both ideas from out of its wreckage and appropriated for his personal benefit the worship of the *Reich*. He had found ready made the cults of the state and of racial blood, but his astounding innovation was to unite these twin beliefs in the cult of his own person so that German youth felt for him a religious devotion and a servile duty that aroused a craving for sacrifice. Notoriously many of his followers attributed divine qualities to the *Fuehrer*, and a cynical Nazi could even suggest to Herr Rauschning that in the party interest it might be desirable to murder Hitler in order to increase the veneration attached to his worship. Hitler had become a tribal god and his cult was the reversion to a savage faith. The Gestapo were the real priests of this religion. Like a modern Moloch, Hitler became an idol who was worshipped because he knew how to perform the magic of his tribe.

There have been other tyrants who have ruled as despotically and as cruelly as Hitler, but never before has it happened that a man born in a civilized community offered so deliberate a challenge to everything which made the value of civilization, or tried so drastically to reverse the course of history. Yet if

jungle law is again to rule the world and the advances that have been made since the cavemen's day are negligible, nothing could be more logical than Hitler's plan to conquer the World by destroying or enslaving his enemies.

Amid the baffled confusion that was felt by timid souls, many must have asked themselves if the old moral order was not a fraud, and if the principles which they had once revered covered only an empty and feeble structure, that had toppled over at the first blow. This war has given an answer to those who have felt these doubts. Americans and British fought for their country but also for a common faith that was born in Jerusalem, nurtured in Athens and Rome, then later shaped by their own ideals of freedom. They have won a great victory against a cruel and primitive creed which with sudden violence had broken out from the depths of the Teutonic forest to conquer the world by its savagery. A religious war fought between two faiths has now been decided by the forces of light triumphing over darkness.

In spite of many doubts there already are some signs of the birth of what may become a new faith. In its present stage it would be a misnomer to speak of this as a religion, and likely enough a belief in future betterment will never be thought of as a creed except in the sense that a Chinese finds nothing incompatible in professing at the same time the Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian doctrines. Certainly this faith contains no challenge of dogma nor threat to any older established religion. Nor is this because

the lay world of to-day is little interested in theological disputation, or cares greatly either about the terrors or the rewards of the after life which formerly were brandished as weapons and prizes held out in the name of religion. The reason is rather because the spiritual values to which men attach significance have changed to take a different form. This new faith is still somewhat vague and inchoate for it is difficult to express eternal ideals in terms that are more specific than those of the Atlantic Charter, but the belief responds to an instinctive feeling for human justice in a way which has more to do with life than it has with law or with political power. It contains some of the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, and some of the practice of the Good Samaritan, and some of the doctrine that underlies the great Charters of American Liberty. It stands for a great liberal ideal that means something more than the performance of good works, for it believes in respecting human dignity and aims at human betterment without regard to race, or creed, or colour. It is a modern version of the Stoic faith and proclaims that the problems of mankind can best be worked out by free men, under free institutions, who have the wish and the will to help their neighbours.

Perhaps a goal of this nature may still be far away, but it is already a half-shaped doctrine that is expressed in the way of to-day which is that of association and the organized effort of great communities when these try to work together for a common end. Its novelty lies in expressing the hopes of many plain

men who are not philosophers. There is in this no easy assumption that human nature can suddenly be changed, or any failure to recognize the immense difficulties that stand in the way, or an expectation that the instincts of men will henceforth only be directed toward altruism and benevolence. The significance of what may gradually begin to take new form in the Western democracies has more to do with the striving for a world order which is to be based on human justice, and which emanates from the belief that man has it in his power to improve his own lot by helping his fellow men. There is ground for hope that by attaching the United Nations to a faith in self-denial and mutual aid, some of the rapacity of victory can be avoided and the spiritual values of our civilization will be rescued from the destruction which Hitler had planned. To the degree that this hope can be fulfilled in the years ahead, the belief of men will have helped to change the course of history toward a higher goal.

## XII. CIVILIZATION AND CHANGE

It is always tempting to search for a cause that will appear to explain political decay in the light of a moral failing, but historical change is a phenomenon that usually depends on far more than any single reason. As happens in the case of human mortality, different ailments frequently coincide to make fatal

a disease that by itself might not have been mortal. The decay of the Roman Empire has always been a favourite subject for the exercise of historians' theories, but no particular explanation has ever proved completely satisfactory. Even the word decay, when it is not strictly defined to some special condition, possesses only a relative significance. While on the Tiber the imperial dignity was sinking ingloriously, the Papacy was slowly rising from humble origins, and as Rome declined a new Empire that called itself Roman was being founded with great splendour on the Bosphorus.

Children play a game called steeplechase in which little leaden horses are made to jump over painted cardboard fences and across ditches until an unlucky throw of the dice sends a horse back to its starting point, just when it is approaching the winning post. History bears some resemblance to this game. Often for centuries men have gone confidently ahead, particularly in the ancient Mediterranean centres of civilization, believing in the stability around them, only to find that their supposed security had suddenly been destroyed, usually by the irruption of fair-haired conquerors who had come down from the North. This happened more than once in Italy, where the invading Goths and Lombards later became softened by those whom they had conquered. Nomad and savage tribes have again and again destroyed the peaceful existence of more civilized nations and caused immense changes that sometimes were gradual and sometimes abrupt, for history is an eternal see-saw,



and its expression varies too greatly and operates too eccentrically to fit long into any one system. Not often do we know the reasons why cataclysms have taken place and only rarely are we able to explain the changes these have caused in terms other than those of crude power.

The alternating vicissitudes of human experience become apparent to the historian when he stumbles blindly through the darkness of the past. How is it possible to explain the blank spaces of history? Time and again brilliant civilizations have perished at the hands of barbarians and barely the memory of their existence remains. The Minoan Era which flourished in Crete has left little more than some exquisite examples of art, discovered in the dust of its buried palaces. A rich culture was then destroyed by barbarians who came from the North, but we remain ignorant of the circumstances which brought about its downfall. The great Empire of Carthage perished at the hands of its conquerors and only the story related by its enemies has been handed down. In the Middle Ages, the Albigenses were exterminated as heretics, and the records destroyed of what is believed to have been a civilization of great promise. A nation's growth is usually gradual and therefore easy to follow step by step, but when ruin and destruction set in the decline can be sudden and the ending unexpected. All this has happened again and again in the face of a common but fallacious belief of Western nations that change must stand for progress—principally because the converse is true.

Cities, States and institutions grow to reach their prime and then decay, but the reasons why all this happens often remain obscure. Nor does the cycle of history run evenly. The Venetian Republic ended ingloriously not owing to its misdeeds but because, for three centuries before, its strength had been slowly sapped by the effects of new discoveries and new rivals for the trade of the East, and the decay was hastened by its own rigid and unchanging structure. Yet at the same time as Venice declined to only a pale shadow of her former power, Venetian art lived its silver age; also when Germany was at its weakest politically, her literature enjoyed golden years that have never been repeated.

The Napoleonic adage that one can do anything with bayonets except sit on them will always be true, for lies, cruelty, and injustice seem to matter little so long as an overwhelming power stands vigilantly behind. But the growing trail of resentment that injustice and cruelty always leave will in the end help truth and decency to bring change. This happens not so much because of any inherent virtue that pertains to truth, or any compelling force in decency, but, as J. S. Mill observed, taking, perhaps, too cynical a view, in the long run lies will be discredited by the recurring proof of their error. Truth may not prevail because it is truth, nor will virtue necessarily triumph over wickedness, but when, sooner or later, the forces of evil become weaker or divided, a prospective leader on the search for followers will look for support by leaning on the side of the angels.

In 1918, Masaryk chose for the new Czechoslovak Republic the ancient motto 'Truth will prevail' to encourage those who cherish belief in the moral background of politics. For truth and justice may be often thwarted, often silenced and defeated, but will always triumph again if only by reason of the alternating phases of change. Even dictators have paid an unconscious tribute to this moral element when they lied about their iniquities and tried to conceal their evil deeds from their subjects.

The moral element which exists in history, although reflected in every change, may have less to do with any abstract ethics of righteousness or at times even with the merits of a cause or the nature of a goal, than it has with the grounds and incentives and principles of conduct that are always associated with acts of human behaviour. How can one otherwise judge the American Civil War? The South may or may not have been constitutionally right and morally wrong, for even to-day many Americans might find it difficult to agree on common criteria. But the great reason why both North and South now look back on that struggle with a mutual pride is because of the sacrifices and courage and fortitude displayed by both sides.

The conduct of men is influenced by something much deeper than a mere functional adjustment to environment which by itself would be insufficient to explain many of the intricacies of historical change. This something, vague as it may seem, has a moral origin which can be both positive and negative.

When positive it is a stimulus that makes for actions that are induced by deep feelings which are usually simple feelings. Negatively this stimulus leads to shallower effects and may result in submission or an acquiescence that emanates from indifference, ignorance or fear. The two constitute different aspects of a moral background that has much to do with the shaping of human behaviour.

In every country the architectural continuity of history is usually built without any too clear design out of many different materials, some excellent and some shoddy, but all somehow cemented together in an irregular edifice. This is what happened in Ancient Rome and for that matter in the history of many countries. Then by a continuous process of change the nation takes shape and becomes formal and impressive. Yet inevitably from time to time rifts and fissures will appear in its structure that must be patched or they will spread. The old building may have to be pulled down and something new erected in its place. This is only the normal process of historical change. The destruction of an old civilization, even when it is inevitable, will mean the destruction of many old values and refinements. Rougher practices then prevail that are used by forceful men who push their way to the front and become the leaders. Time must pass before sufficient stability has been acquired for a real civilization to grow.

Precise values can never be given to the diverse factors that lead to change, because they are never appraised in the same way, nor can they be isolated

from their environment. There is always some undefinable and variable but vital element that is associated with questions of growth and decline and which helps to regulate the flow and volume and direction of change. With this there is something in the nature of a moral groove that contributes to influence behaviour and which, owing to the prestige attached to tradition, makes for stability. This operates principally in normal times, for recent events have shown how precarious are the foundations of such sanctions and how easy is the decline from the slender margin of elemental practices which until lately were believed to have been permanently secured. It can only be hoped that the precepts of Sinai and of the Mount, and the acceptance of broad principles of human dignity and liberty, will always remain the basis of our future civilization, but there is no automatic process by which their permanence can be perpetuated.

Among the tests of civilization is the willingness men have to conform to self-imposed restraints that aim to bring amenities into human intercourse and so correct some of the cruder vagaries of behaviour. The general effect of these unwritten practices is to stabilize conduct by imposing on it certain limitations. Duelling, for instance, exercised a direct influence on manners. Current standards of human intercourse should help to explain a great deal of what takes place in history. Normally they are derived from accepted usages which have been gradually shaped through the ages by custom and tradition

until they form together a loose code that acts like a groove for conduct and is taken largely on faith—for some faith, even in standards, is necessary. They aim to exercise a stabilizing and moderating influence that is the counterpart for behaviour of what social security tries to attain for human welfare. In periods of orderly development men are usually willing to accept a code of this nature as a kind of guide for the prevailing practices of conduct. When, for one reason or another, old standards begin to fall into disrepute or neglect, either because they are no longer appropriate, or because of the discredit attached to the men who had previously benefited by them, there follows a moral chaos which usually coincides with much corruption and disorder before it leads to violence and ends in disaster. A credulity in strange panaceas will at such times take the place of faith; monstrous beliefs are entertained, and brutal force will increasingly be substituted for law and authority. Recent instances of the degradation of standards that took place before the World War can be found in the planned murders of Dollfuss and of King Alexander, the one plotted in Germany, the other in Italy.

When an age is stained by violence and crime, changes are much more likely to take place abruptly and spasmodically. Such ages ought more properly to be judged by what should be called the short-term view of history, in order to distinguish it from the long-term view that can be applied to normal periods. The distinction to be made between these two categories is largely one of perspective and

duration, but no test can be absolute and the line to be drawn is far from rigid. Yet any interpretation of historical change must depend on which view is taken. Already we identify Nazi barbarism with the short term, but it might have been otherwise if the Battle of Britain had ended differently, or if Moscow had fallen, or if there had been another occupant than Roosevelt in the White House. The fate of the world is often said to hang on a thread and this would be correct if only the short-term view of history were to prevail, for in that case civilization has escaped from disaster by a hair's breadth. But in any ultimate sense, in spite of the prolonged tragedy of suffering, even this might not have been true. Hitler could boast that his order would endure for a thousand years, but few can doubt that sooner or later a revolt must have broken out or a palace plot would have been successful, though never soon enough to have prevented the mounting mass of crime and misery. Often before in history protracted periods of darkness have blackened the world, yet there has always been another dawn, just as there may always come another night.

The substance of history can be compared to a texture which is composed of many threads like the woof of a cloth that has been woven in a succession of different patterns which are sometimes commonplace and rigid and sometimes fantastic and hideous. The material of which the cloth is made will not be uniform, but the difference of the substances utilized is much less great than might appear from the

surface design which meets the eye. Relatively speaking only a small part of human action reaches the notoriety of history and it is even questionable if that part is the most important. Usually it is the fringe and surface of life that forces attention by its conspicuousness and is then recorded. But any study of history would be grossly defective if it neglected to notice the great silent changes which go on underneath in the outlook and in the habits of men, merely because these are hard to observe and are often inarticulate. An obvious case in point can be found in the attitude to witchcraft. The riddle of much that is unexplained lies hidden underground, where a subterranean river of change flows through the ages to make the real continuity of history. This river follows a different course from the so-called historical continuity of nations which often tends to stretch more than to serve the truth. Popular belief for instance, perhaps correctly, links King Arthur with King Alfred as English national heroes, although historically speaking the one stands for a Celtic and the other for a Saxon Britain, which for centuries were locked in deadly conflict. Far more significant than many heroes whose claim to renown rests on tribal successes, has been the slow, silent, unobserved, but continuous march of change that always goes on through history. In the course of time many deep and ancient hatreds founded on bitter memories of crimes, of spoliations and massacres, have gradually subsided and been buried and forgotten under a dead past out of which new nations have emerged. We are



often unable to follow the slow steps by which men who once were enemies have been brought together centuries ago, except when, often by accident, some literary or legal or political document helps to register a particular stage in this process of social welding. Long afterwards when the result becomes apparent it is discovered that a new nation with a common loyalty and pride has been formed. In the end men usually take for granted the silent steps which gradually and invisibly have brought about some of the greatest changes in history.

We become aware of the results that follow from these great changes more easily than we understand the methods by which they have been effected. When an oilfield is opened and a new well begins to gush, some of the oil tapped will then seep away through underground channels. Something similar happens by contagion in history. Ideas that have stirred men in one country spread to produce similar effects in others. A century and a quarter, and the entire width of a continent, stood between the destruction of the Bourbon Monarchy in 1793 and that of the Romanoff Empire in 1917, as if to mark the time lag that separated the political evolution of France from that of Russia. But above or below the surface revolutionary ideas were active. The nationalism that issued from the French Revolution spread like wildfire over Europe, turning first against Napoleon, and awakening everywhere a new political consciousness that after Waterloo made a seething cauldron out of the Continent. Cavour used its explosive energy to

unify Italy, Bismarck employed it to found an empire. As soon as the contagion reached the East, it aroused the Balkans to violence. In the Habsburg Empire, subject nationalities revived almost forgotten historical memories and made 1914 inevitable. To-day the same ferment, spreading across Asia, continues to work great changes.

In its modern form nationalism has become an instrument of change that has served to poison the intellectual ties which once bound together the Christian world. Long ago it abandoned all pretence of that early generosity the French Revolution had proclaimed at its beginning, and which made Goethe observe after Valmy that a new era had begun in history. More and more nationalism has veered toward a narrow racial outlook till it came to practice an intolerance far worse than that exercised by the absolute monarchs whom the Revolution overthrew because they were tyrants. This is because in its European expression nationalism has always found itself in close neighbourhood with some other nationality and able to develop only at its expense. Among the problems of to-morrow none will be greater than the task of reuniting nationalism with justice and humanity, for unless the existing disharmony can be reduced the prospect ahead will long be one of strife.

There is, however, another brand of nationalism made possible by a continental extension and which makes for spiritual change in a more liberal sense. The United States, possessing a highly awakened

political consciousness and a pride of country fostered by common memories and aims, has successfully cultivated a spirit of nationalism which is no less potent or persuasive than that of any real or supposed strain of blood. Since primitive Islam swept over the East to unite many peoples in one faith there has been nothing comparable to the creation of the cult of Americanism in a population which is composed of many different origins who are united as one nation in the essentials of citizenship. This is true even of recent immigrants who have huddled together in the great cities where they live in compact communities that are slow and difficult to dilute. Occasionally some of these will try to bring pressure to bear in favour of their kinsmen in Europe, but in other respects they are content to share the same duties, aims and problems with the rest of the nation.

A normal process of change by assimilation goes on continuously in every democratic community that lives within a greater one. This is usually characterized by the desire to reduce any differences that separate its members from the majority. There is nothing new in this phenomenon. Already in the age of Elizabeth, Edmund Spenser had observed that within a few generations the descendants of English settlers in Ireland became completely Irish. But never before have such transformations in national feeling been practised on the same scale as in the United States, where every elementary school serves as an instrument of Americanization. This

gospel of Americanism emanates from an almost religious belief in the country's institutions, and a pride in its memories and ideals that carries with it a spirit of loyalty and a sense of obligation which more than tilts the scale against any dwindling inheritance that still clings to recent citizens from their old-world past.

### XIII. SOME EXPLANATIONS OF CHANGE

Change as something which is inherent in life is a continuous physical and moral process that begins with birth and ends only at death. Definite causes can be found, however, to explain the reasons by which changes have at different times been induced, speeded or retarded in accordance with the pressure behind or the compulsions of necessity. These causes can also influence, moderate and interact on each other so that they affect the rhythm, volume and direction of historical change. Sometimes change takes place openly by legislation or decree, and responds to opinion or policy. More often it comes invisibly through many gradual social adjustments and the silent workings of time which bring their own remedy. It is often difficult to detect the early steps by which many almost imperceptible changes of opinion and custom take place until their consequences begin to appear plainly in the open, to be registered by definite facts. Even then it may not be

easy to apportion the different elements which enter into the composition of new measures or provide the motive power that lies behind every change and contributes to shape its direction. Some may discover the causes for change in a kind of biological necessity, which affects communities and nations in much the same way as it does men while they follow the cycle of life from birth to decay. Others will try to explain the reasons for change as emanating from a conscious direction given for a purpose that may be human or divine. Neither explanation is in itself satisfactory, and even the most primitive community will at times react to something more than the gratification of its physical necessities. The kind of economic history which sees in man a creature who responds solely to his material wants is, however, as mythical as Rousseau's portrait of the virtuous savage.

At the other extreme it is no less difficult to think of history as being directed by an unseen force working for some presumably higher end, yet carrying out its designs with so little sense of justice or humanity. Speculations that have to do with primal causes and ultimate goals transcend the range of ordinary reason, and man is a baffled creature whenever he tries to go beyond the closed gates of his own limitations. But within this narrow enclosure there still is much that he can learn, and many paths lie before him that are as yet imperfectly explored. No single test can ever be sufficient, and those that are applied will always revolve around the varying relation that life and change bear to each other.

Plainly the urge for change is something that is living and not mechanical, nor can this urge ever be isolated and accurately weighed or measured. Yet it may be stimulated by a process that can be compared to applying an electric current with an intermittent voltage which will either be feeble or highly charged. This may conceivably be done by propaganda, but the problem is much more complicated than merely determining the means and volume of transmission. The true significance of change has to be looked for not so much in the mechanics of its origin or in the sensational effects of its occasional dynamism as in the accumulation of imperceptible happenings that go on silently and continuously. Passers-by who stand on a high river bank may not see the flow of the current which runs below them. Bacon aptly observed that Time itself is the greatest of innovators.

Accidents and the so-called Acts of God can also bring on great changes, but only rarely will these affect the general nature of the problem. Thus the destruction caused by floods and earthquakes may either be sufficiently cataclysmic to arrest all human change, or, as more frequently happens, after such calamities the survivors will take remedial measures and begin their lives afresh. Physical accidents lie outside the range of human foresight, but in cases when they bring about even wholesale destruction this is usually followed by a patient effort to rebuild afresh on old or new foundations. Disasters that lead to waste and disorder can be remedied by human toil

in much the same way as the havoc which is left by war will be repaired as soon as men begin again to design a fresh pattern for their lives.

Are great changes to be explained by minute or by accidental causes which led to their occurrence, or do the latter only serve to hasten something that is inevitable? The two greatest political events of the last century in Europe were the unifications of Germany and of Italy. The first was the direct result of the War of 1870, which was brought on by Bismarck's admittedly forged version of the Ems telegram. The second was skilfully engineered by Cavour, who remarked to his intimates that if they had done in their own interest the things which they had done for Italy, they would have been great scoundrels. Both events were inevitable, but neither would have happened in the way it did, nor at the time it did, without two statesmen who employed the most unscrupulous methods to attain their aims.

Polybius observed that the final criterion of good and evil lies not in what is done but in the different reasons and different purposes of the doer. Kings did not regard anyone as their natural foe or friend, but measured enmity and friendship by the sole standard of expediency. One does not have to be a moralist to observe the contrast which often exists between a lofty purpose and the evil methods that are employed to carry it out. The Abolition of Slavery was indisputably an act of beneficial legislation and a turning point in American history, but it required the use of much unsavoury pressure, and

some highly questionable bargains were made in order to secure the votes necessary for its passage. The close proximity of good and bad in all that touches human conduct can provide a more frequent cause for change than is commonly suspected, for it means that the motive power which lies behind any effort may be composed of some very mixed ingredients that cannot fuse for long, so that a clash will be likely as soon as the original purpose is once secured. This has been the ordinary experience of every Coalition. The acts of men are often laden with many incongruous elements that move on different planes, and even in different directions, so that when a collision occurs fresh changes with fresh alignments become inevitable.

Changes will also frequently be judged from the most opposite angles. Measures like the Bolshevik programme, or the agrarian reforms that were carried out in Central European countries after the last War, brought on social cataclysms that doomed entire classes but bestowed great benefits on others. Acts of this nature were invariably represented by their promoters as necessary and constructive social reforms, and were naturally stigmatized by those who found themselves despoiled as robbery. As soon as a new vested interest is established, moral reasons will be advanced to justify any plunder. In Tudor England, the spoliation of the monasteries helped to enlist in the cause of Reformation the services of the ablest lawyers, but their dissolution although desirable led to grave social unrest and resulted in



immense misery. In the French Revolution, the peasants were to become firmly attached to the new principles only after they had benefited from the confiscation of emigré lands.

It is a recognized maxim of history that spoils go to the victor, and the difference is usually one of degree, for some conquerors have shown themselves more magnanimous than others. The finality of defeat will of necessity be followed by fresh measures that register what has taken place. Yet sometimes the changes that are caused by conquest take unexpected directions. Tartars and Manchus vanquished the Chinese, but their barbaric rudeness yielded to the latter's superior civilization. The real test of how to judge the significance of events is to measure their effects against the span of time and by the perspective of years. However important they may appear they are no more than points on a map of history which is meaningless when it is not drawn to scale.

Changes come also in ways that lead unexpectedly to the most unforeseen consequences, so that their unintentional effects can produce the most surprising results. Overnight, a mechanical invention like the cotton gin brought the problem of slavery into a new significance that tragically altered the direction of American history. In our own time few at first were able to understand the vast social implications contained in what seemed to be a merely useful device like the internal combustion engine. Inventions like the aeroplane that were designed solely for rapid communication have resulted in many moral and

political reactions which were entirely foreign to their original purpose. The urge of change that exists in mankind can never be artificially restricted, and the ingenuity of men will always explore new opportunities in the most unforeseen ways. Mechanical contrivances only multiply the agencies by which fresh changes are made easier and in doing this they lead to continuous developments. New and unexpected uses will be found for inventions that will result in further changes, for no human activity can ever be permanently separated from life or remain long confined within a water-tight compartment.

Regarded from a somewhat different angle, the indirect consequences that follow political action will illustrate the truth of this axiom. The American Revolution in a purely military sense was quite insignificant although judged politically it proved to be one of the most important wars in history. Yet it achieved something greater even than the new republic's independence, which sooner or later was inevitable. The signers of the Declaration of Independence included some remarkably able men, but it is questionable if many of these foresaw how admirably adapted was the democratic creed, which they proclaimed for the new republic, to fit the needs of a continent that was destined to attract millions of emigrants from the Old World and to breed frontiersmen who were to build a great Empire out of a wilderness. It is fortunate, to-day, for the outlook of humanity that in the Western Democracies, political reasoning should still be based on the generous

assumptions of eighteenth-century philosophers who regarded man as inherently good by nature and looked forward to making him better by education. The future hope of the world may rest on the fact that in spite of at times cynical methods, much of this benevolent spirit has been preserved from earlier days to shape the Western political creed toward a liberal goal.

The flow of human change when it is left without a lofty aim tends to become sluggish and concerned principally with material interests. In this way its course resembles the physiological processes that take place in the life cycle of all animals. Something additional is needed to rescue it from this moral lethargy. The incentive is usually produced by some sudden and often violent stimulus that may be either intentional or accidental, and may come from outside or from within. Between two extremes, the one responding to something physiological and the other to something moral, are many intermediate gradations that make for change and which are limited solely by the variety of human effort. No living form of activity can ever be preserved so rigidly that it will remain unaltered, and it is only by tracing the different stages of change and observing the various processes and ramifications of their development that one can begin to understand the particular problems of the ages, as they follow each other to form historical continuity.

## XIV. RELATION OF CHANGE TO LIFE

Historians are accustomed to chop their subject into pieces to which they attach convenient labels and then run the narrative with edges carefully trimmed into a chronological order. There is something artificial in forcing a subject-matter into a mould from which usually much of the flavour of neglected or unnoticed connections has been omitted. History is not made for the benefit of historians, but is a necessary consequence of human action, and the major interest of events does not lie in following the record of their chronicle, but in knowing the reasons why they happened in some particular way, and the causes which made men react to and bring about further changes.

Historical problems can only be understood in the light of the experiences and opinions of the men concerned with them, and these will vary with every age. The significance which should be attached to every manifestation of change as this takes place is that it will register the record of different stages of problems that bring out the range of human experience. Every generation creates its own body of experience, and the treatment which is applied to the problems encountered will never be the same, but will always take a different shape even when the questions at issue are substantially alike. Variations of method will be repeated indefinitely, for men in different ages may react similarly but never identically to the same things. How many interpretations have, for instance,

been attached at different times to the American Constitution, the Monroe Doctrine, or to questions of law like the ownership of private property. A mountain peak will look very differently when viewed from different points or seen by different lights. The fallacy of any so-called philosophy of history lies in professing to discover certain immutable laws, for except the law of change no other has ever existed or can exist, a fact which helps to explain why history will always be an art and never a science.

Differences of interpretation are inevitably followed by differences of behaviour which become apparent as soon as the expression of an idea is connected with life. For life is itself the real cause for change. Even the most ignorant demagogue when he grossly distorts the truth in order to arouse the rabble, understands how important is the human aspect of his appeal. No bookish explanation that looks on history as a subject from which life has long ago departed, and in which change no longer takes place, can ever provide a substitute for this missing living quality; the past loses much of its meaning and most of its interest if it is not in some way joined to what is alive. No judgment given regarding former events, no matter how remote these are, can ever be permanently embalmed any more than a political condition can artificially be frozen into permanence. The chronicle of a nation's history will remain a record of only dry and sterile facts unless it is also attached to what is living.

The changes that take place in history will always vary immensely both in an absolute and in a relative sense, for these can be widespread, local or temporary. Some changes will excite only a tepid or narrow interest at the time, later to become significant, others will arouse at once the most passionate fervour. It is impossible to think of unchanging nations any more than it is of unchanging men, but many things that happen are so localized and restricted in their importance that they are only attached indirectly to the main current of history. Their study concerns the specialist, for although they indicate drifts of opinion they rarely throw more than a secondary light on the real problems of mankind. The greater problems are fortunately few, for not many questions will directly stir the passions of men. Yet it is to these that we must turn to try to understand the principles and aims which most often guide human conduct. Generally speaking questions of this order concern such matters as national unity, a threat to its independence, also human and property rights, and liberty of conscience. Again and again, in every age, such causes have inflamed the minds of men and led to many blunders, and tragedies and crimes, but also to wise and statesmanlike decisions. Again and again they have served to bring out the courage, devotion and sacrifice, but also the cowardice, treachery and stupidity of which mankind is capable. Controversies and struggles have repeatedly revolved around these questions, and their consequences have led to many other changes that always follow each other in human

relations. The effects of the major issues stand out, however, like milestones that mark a road which winds among the hills, sometimes climbing, and at others dipping into valleys, taking first one direction and then another.

It is a truism to remark that the best and the worst in men often stand in such close proximity to each other that the two are hard to dissociate. Theologians who ponder over the dualism between mind and body can find a counterpart for this in the connection that exists in history between thought and action. Few events ever take place that have not been influenced by some opinion, whether wise or unwise, generous or selfish. The origin of this opinion may remain shrouded in obscurity and stay unrecognized in a dim background. Yet whenever changes occur they will also be affected by the past experiences of the human mind. Nothing takes place spontaneously or without some cause, and nothing can ever remain long isolated or unrelated to its environment. Questions that concern even such apparently dry subjects as the statistics of population, or the promotion of public health, seem to concern only the specialist, but they broaden when they convey a moral and a political significance which sooner or later will be reflected in a country's ambitions and policies. The decline in the French birthrate found its counterpart in the pacific policy of that nation, and the influence which this attitude exercised on public opinion contributed to the collapse of 1940. There is in history no clear dividing line between the physical and the moral.

Historical problems also are largely influenced by what for want of a better name can be called the climate or the spirit of an age. Every age breathes an atmosphere and possesses a special flavour of its own. It is far from clear how this originates but it will vary in every country and not be the same in different strata within a nation. To use the word 'climate' in order to describe the atmosphere of a period is something of a misnomer for what can neither be measured nor weighed by any recognized standard. Historical changes can, however, be induced by some highly elusive imponderables of varying importance, which in their effects may be compared to vitamins. They remain invisible and are attached to nothing substantial. Although they have no apparent body, they possess an unexplained power to stimulate and even to accelerate historical action by causing changes to take place at critical times, often in a seemingly irrational manner. They exercise influence by a propaganda which has no need to be artificially stimulated like the planned propaganda that attempts to bring about something similar. Particularly during moments of crisis, these imponderables will act—sometimes on one side, sometimes on both, but always unseen, never clearly defined, and generally inexplicable. The climate of any definite period implies the existence of such imponderables, even when they are difficult to describe and impossible to measure. One only is aware of their presence as substances that operate in much the same way as do the ferments which help to spread the



contagion of an idea. They also contribute to speed the velocity or increase the violence of a movement toward some change. Mass frenzy which escapes from ordinary propaganda and leads frequently to acts of collective savagery is peculiarly subject to invisible influences of this nature, but there are other imponderables that at times have affected the conduct of nations, or for that matter of individuals, in incalculable ways. Influences of this order are seemingly exercised by the release of some long pent-up emotion which sweeps aside more normal considerations, precipitates violent action, and puts an end to those restraints that are usually imposed by experience, tradition and reason. In one way or another spasmodic influences of this character can occur at critical moments and may affect the acts of nations along lines for which no rational interpretation can be found.

This circumstance adds to the difficulty of describing the climate of an age by any known terminology or by any recognized test. One is only aware that such a thing exists, that under different forms it has always existed, and that the changes for which it is responsible will never be identical. This may seem to render illusory the attempt to obtain any real understanding of its nature. We know that men have acted in accordance with the practices and standards of their age, but how and why at some particular time certain ideas that are never new, yet always appear novel, should suddenly become sufficiently persuasive to alter human behaviour and divert the conduct of men

from the more normal avenues they have followed until then is a question wrapped in much obscurity. Like rolling clouds in the sky the spirit of an age is never immobile but remains elusive and volatile, always on the point of change, sometimes gradually and silently as when one period blends imperceptibly into the next, sometimes abruptly as happens during the storm of a crisis. Whenever an effort has been made artificially to prevent this spirit from seeking an expression, sooner or later that attempt will break down, usually with all the violence that has been piled up after long impatience at delay. It may then easily explode into revolution or war. This is only to be expected when an order is artificially maintained beyond its time and when it stands in contradiction to the healthy flow of life.

Ideas acquire importance in history after their influence has been registered by a pressure for change. Often we are unable to follow how this process occurs, but know that it has much to do with the origin, development or decay of institutions and social groupings. There also are changes brought on by ideas that will soon lose the living quality which once stirred human passions. The memory of fierce hatreds formerly excited by theological controversies still lingers after the matters in dispute have been forgotten. Perhaps similar experiences will be repeated in future ages over some of the political controversies that have replaced theology as subjects for human difference. Also the reasons that explain the diffusion of some ideas across frontiers, or why

certain periods more than others have been so sensitive and receptive to change and then ceased to be so, are hard to discover. How is one to account for the rapid spread of Christianity or of Buddhism? Why during the Middle Ages, when only few men were able to read, were institutions like feudalism and guilds, scholastic philosophy and Gothic art, common to the greater part of the Western Christian world? During the Reformation, at a time when countries were torn by religious conflict, Europe still preserved a greater intellectual unity than in the present time, which was based on classical learning, and which allowed Oxford scholars to feel at home in Padua and Bologna. Proud as we are of the enormous improvements in world communications, the mechanical changes that instinctively we associate with progress have not led to any better moral or intellectual understanding between peoples.

The attempts which were made before the World War to bring together men of different countries met with little success except in a restricted sense and for limited purposes. Matters like international sport, for which the ancient Greeks could call a truce during the Olympic Games, led in their modern revival to a fierce spirit of competition that inflamed the very feeling it was intended to allay. A political creed, like Communism, also laid claim to cut across national boundaries, but remained too much under the influence of Moscow to be universal. Even Socialism, since 1914, has forfeited what title it once possessed to stand for the brotherhood of man. The

Church of Rome continues, the venerable tradition handed down by a great international organization, but does so with a wise recognition of the limitations that oblige it to restrict its efforts and leave to Caesar what is Caesar's. From none of these movements can one as yet discover the birth of a new idea that will be persuasive enough to sweep across the world and change the outlook of men in a way to reconcile a truculent and greedy nationalism with a milder and more generous humanity.

There is, however, reason to hope that the future of the world may be less dismal than many to-day fear. In a moment of grave danger Roosevelt associated the Allied Nations with some lofty aims. These may not provide sufficient incentive to change human behaviour, but there are also practical motives that will give them support. The nations of the world may evince in the future a greater willingness to live in peace, not because of their sympathy for each other but from motives of their own security. The devastating effects of the new weapons employed have made plain the simple fact that the world to-day is faced with the alternative of planning for its own eventual destruction in the near future or of maintaining peace. This lesson is driven home at a time when the brutal experience of war has been felt alike by victors and vanquished. It would be foolish, however, to expect that a permanent peace is possible merely because of certain accepted general aims or because of other limited decisions taken by Allied statesmen who can do little more than register certain

landmarks on the road ahead. Peace cannot to-day, and probably never can be, maintained without power, any more than power by itself will be sufficient to preserve peace. Too weak it becomes ineffective, too strong it will lead inevitably to fresh abuses. For many years to come the problems of peace will have to be thrashed out within the limits of a triangle of which the three fixed points for each nation are sovereignty, force and law. The relation between these different elements as a consequence of their varying strength is likely to lead to frequent and difficult revisions which will make the preservation of peace depend on the adaptability of international intercourse to change.

A time like the present when the spectacle of so much misery and crime fills men with hate and when evil has at last been vanquished only by the ruthless use of force, seems little propitious for the calm discussion of problems of future peace. The value of naked power as a practical instrument is still so great that it must outweigh all other factors. But a world in ruins cannot wait indefinitely for a perfect design, and the design itself may be less important than many to-day may believe. Every plan has by its nature something that is static which tends to make of it, at times a hollow frame, and at others a trap. The fact that certain features of any design for peace are to be given a greater or lesser prominence, or that some particular procedure is to be followed in preference to another, matters much less than may be supposed. What really counts will be the earnest wish

of nations to agree together for purposes of peace, not only when agreement is part of victory, but when the difficult time comes later for the inevitable changes. The real test will then lie in the weight and purpose of the other ingredients that have to be blended with force.

The problem before the world is how to devise a lasting framework for peace that is based on principles sufficiently universal in their application, but also sufficiently elastic to reconcile the use of force with the practice of a civilization that is always on the march. Under different forms and in different degrees this problem is one that is eternal in history, for men have at all times sought to attain a security for what they cherished even when they knew that the order which they wished to preserve would at once be gnawed from within and threatened from without. There can be no permanent remedy for this dilemma, and with different methods every generation will be called upon to solve the eternal problem of reconciling the desire for stability with the need for change.

## XV. THE MEANING OF HISTORY

‘If we take from history the discussion of why, how and wherefore each thing was done and whether the result was what we should have reasonably expected, what is left is a clever essay but not a lesson.’ (Polybius, *History*, III, 31.)

The historian usually accepts events without making too close an enquiry into their origin. As soon as he searches for the deeper causes that bring about change, he has to be on his guard not to confuse easy explanations with consequences which will often follow from events in a kind of *non sequitur*. The physical, material or mechanical explanations of change that frequently are advanced by historians can be ingenious and plausible, but they take too much account of purely external reasons. These contributory causes all have their importance, but whenever they are isolated from the hidden elements that lie underneath they may be given an exaggerated prominence which leaves the real problems of history as these affect the human soul fragmentary and inconclusive. Man is unique in being the only animal with whom the urge for change can originate from the stimulus of an idea that is translated into a conscious act. The philosopher Croce has aptly observed that history always registers a moral decision. At some point, or over some event, men are compelled to express a preference from which the course of history will follow. Willingly or not there comes a time when a choice has to be made between two different lines of conduct, and this preference will lead to others in a kind of endless chain that makes the sequence of history and covers the range of human experience. Sometimes this choice is spontaneous, as happened when the Greeks resisted the Axis. Sometimes when ideas have become confused and doubts and fears prevail, the moral choice hangs fire or is delayed until

it can only be partially, imperfectly and belatedly expressed after such bitter trials as France has lately undergone.

The current belief that there is nothing new under the sun leads to the commonplace but shallow remark that history repeats itself. This does not signify much more than a generally misleading analogy between events that have a similarity in their intention or effect but little else in common beyond a superficial resemblance. Philip II, Napoleon, and Hitler, tried unsuccessfully to invade England, but this said, the likeness between them ceases. The rise and fall of Empires, and the circumstance that countries may go through similar experiences in victory or defeat conveys a lesson to the philosopher much more than it does to the historian. No two events will ever be precisely alike, for the living forces that lead up to these and give them their special character can never be identical.

Consciously or instinctively nations, like men, create desired patterns toward which they attempt to shape their course. Again and again they try to complete some design without ever quite being able to attain it. In attempting this they hope to find a continuity that is never quite uninterrupted, nor will ever quite follow the path they would like to tread. History resembles a kaleidoscope in which human actions shift about in a continually varying pattern that keeps forming and dissolving and then forming again, never twice in quite the same way and never fully completed. As one design fades away it is re-



placed by a new one and as fast as this recedes another one takes its place. This process, which is usually accompanied with much waste and frequent disorder, is inherent in the flow of life, and is necessary in order to prevent stagnation and to extend the human frontiers. In contrast to it there is also another process that takes place in history which attempts to stabilize the flow of life and subject its course to the more permanent controls of law and government and custom, in an effort to correct a disorder which might otherwise drift toward confusion and chaos. Both of these processes are common to historical change and are necessary and complementary to each other, so that they stand in a mutual relation which is both permanent and variable. For change and stability oscillate, so to speak, between two poles that are connected by many visible and invisible links, although the poles themselves remain far apart—the one mobile and variable and the other fixed and stable. In the continuous friction that goes on between these poles there is lighted the vital spark of historical change.

The problems of history become transformed through the ages, some gradually, and some abruptly when violence intervenes. Action can only take place by the agency of change, but it is quickened or retarded by the ferment of ideas. Ideas are then translated into terms of human energy and they lead to action, which is an exercise of power that brings change. Between action and change history runs its course, in which Caliban will serve a beneficent or the evil Prospero.







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